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ELIZABETH TUDOR: RECONCILING FEMININITY AND AUTHORITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Tudor succeeded to England's throne during a time when misogynist societal ideology questioned the authority of a female monarch. Religious opposition to a woman ruler was based on biblical precedent, which reflected the general attitude that women were inferior to men. Elizabeth's dilemma was reconciling her femininity with her sovereignty, most notably concerning her justification for power, the issue of marriage and succession, and the conflict over the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.

The speeches Elizabeth presented to Parliament illuminate her successful solidification of her authority from a feminine gendered position. She established and reinforced her status through figurative language that presented her femininity as favorable to ruling England, ultimately transcending her womanhood to become an incarnation of the state. Elizabeth's speeches reflect her brilliance at fashioning herself through divine and reciprocal imagery, which subsequently redefined English society, elevating her to the head of a male-dominated hierarchy. By establishing her position as second to God, Elizabeth relegated all men to a status beneath hers. Elizabeth's solution to the perceived liability of her gender was to recreate herself through divine imagery that appropriated God's authority as her own. She reinforced her power through a reciprocal relationship with Parliament, evoking the imagery of motherhood to redefine the monarchy as an exchange rather than an absolute rule.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the misogyny of her time, Elizabeth Tudor was a woman who presided at the top of a male hierarchy and successfully reconciled her rank to her gender. She solidified her position as England's monarch through her skillful use of imagery that justified her authority from a feminine position. Elizabeth elevated her personal femininity to a divine status through figurative language that portrayed her as second to God through her subservience, substantiating her claim with images of her as handmaid, virgin and mother. She redefined the hierarchical order as God, herself, and Parliament, presenting herself as a woman who possessed the necessary attributes to rule a kingdom. She diminished her threat to the existing male hierarchy through maternal imagery, defining her relationship with Parliament as an exchange of love and care rather than an absolute rule. She separated her femininity from her body politic, transcending her womanhood to become an incarnation of the state. She reinforced her authority by enveloping her personal accomplishments within her language of reciprocity, which she in turn framed with imagery associating her with the divine.

Elizabeth's speeches combine traditional concepts of women's subservience and the divine right of kings to establish her delegation of God's authority. Her manipulation of these concepts is illustrated in her speeches describing her subservience to God, her opinion on marriage and succession, and her responses to Parliament's petition to execute Mary, Queen of Scots. These speeches reveal how she overcomes the sentiment of a nation that believes in patriarchy to secure and protect her sovereignty.

Elizabeth's speeches not only portray her self-fashioning but also reveal the social attitudes she seeks to change. Her legacy includes the nationalization of England and its people's self-image shifting toward being English first - above religion, succession and social order. She secures her role as absolute sovereign by emphasizing its importance over all else, most notably her gender.

Elizabeth emphasizes her role as a ruler ordained by divine providence, implying that if the head of that hierarchy placed her on England's throne, then all others must be relegated to a lesser position. Her self-fashioning is part of a redefinition of all English society that places her at the head while simultaneously relegating all men (particularly those in Parliament) to a position subservient to hers.

Elizabeth's speeches reflect a brilliant and deliberate pattern of image management that presents her as a loving and humble servant of God, divinely chosen to lead England through a difficult period. She rarely addresses Parliament without referring to their loving relationship, her care for them in her role as protector, her gratitude for their loyalty, or God's grace in allowing her to govern them wisely. She continually refers to God and her religion, praises the prudence of Parliament, and promises to respond to them with the same loyalty that they have shown her. Her words reinforce two important relationships: one between her and God, and the other between her and Parliament. Elizabeth is God's chosen protector of England, and in return she asks for Parliament's love and loyalty. She justifies her worthiness to rule by redefining her femininity through subservience and maternal care.

Elizabeth establishes her sovereignty through her submission to God's will, inferring that her position is the result of God's design alone. She emphasizes her devotion to God to establish religious precedent for her reign, citing divine right as her justification for ruling and signifying God's authority as her own. She effectively removes the issue of her femininity from any argument against the source of her power.

Elizabeth combines religious justification with Mary Tudor's secular arguments to justify her authority, learning from criticism of Mary's failure to address biblical precedent against female rule. She responds to Protestant treatises against a female monarchy by reinforcing her direct relationship to God, depicting herself as His faithful servant and claiming that personal ambition has no part in her sovereignty.

By interpreting Parliament's petitions as an expression of care, Elizabeth redefines the monarchy as an exchange rather than an absolute rule, providing God's protection in return for loyalty and love. Her maternal imagery imposes a subservient identity on Parliament, enabling her to reinforce her status as God's chosen delegate.

Elizabeth separates her femininity from the monarchy, acknowledging her inferior status as a woman while invoking divine authority as sovereign. She establishes validity for her reign through her subservience to God, while justifying her sovereign authority through her body politic. She portrays herself as the recipient of divine power rather than the source, appropriating God's superior status as her own. She designates her authority as the result of her submission to divine providence, maintaining a level of feminine modesty that is acceptable to her male subjects.

Elizabeth postpones the issue of marriage and succession by arguing that her responsibility as head of state outweighs her female obligation to bear children and perpetuate her line. She cites the safety of England as her greatest priority, asserting that a marriage would be more detrimental to national security than the open question of succession. She emphasizes her marriage to England and her people as the result of her dedication to her body politic, and ultimately becomes an incarnation of the state.

Elizabeth declares herself a virgin queen, inviting an inevitable comparison to the Virgin Mary and empowering her femininity through divine imagery. Her virginity implies that she is married to the state and subsequently exempt from the obligations of ordinary women. Her virgin image transforms her subservience into divinity, elevating her femininity beyond compliance to normal social expectations. Through divine imagery, Elizabeth redefines the existing hierarchy and creates a status second to God.

Elizabeth maintains her authority through her reciprocity with Parliament, defining their relationship through the maternal imagery of love. She fashions their relationship as an exchange of care and protection, rather than an absolute rule. She redefines Parliament's petition that she marry as an expression of concern rather than a mandate, redirecting their anxiety over succession into an expression of love for her.

Elizabeth glorifies her personal accomplishments as evidence of her worthiness to rule. She separates her femininity from her body politic by divine right, and validates God's faith in her by emphasizing her proven abilities. She redefines Parliament as the recipient of God's grace through her guidance.

Elizabeth combines public hesitation with covert action to resolve the crisis of Mary Stuart's threat to Protestant rule. Her dilemma is the retaliation of catholic factions to any decision she makes concerning Mary's execution. She risks an invasion from European Catholics if she condemns Mary, and internal rebellion from Mary's supporters if she remains silent. In addition to the Catholic threat, misogynist ideology requires feminine silence in public, while Elizabeth's sovereignty demands a public response. Her solution is to condemn Mary privately through the protected medium of female writing, while adopting a hesitant posture publicly.

Elizabeth defines Mary's threat to her authority as a private conflict between two women, enabling her to deal with Mary through her poetry and correspondence. She privately states her true intent to eliminate the Scottish queen while maintaining plausible deniability in public. Elizabeth claims mortification at the disclosure of her personal writings concerning Mary, reinforcing her affect feminine silence in public. She calls herself a gossip by discussing the affair, designating her poem as privileged information by its confidentiality. Elizabeth redefines parliament's identity as her confidant by allowing them access to her personal feelings, creating an alliance out of their conflict. She depicts her femininity as an asset, claiming authority through subservience to God, reinforcing it through reciprocity with parliament, and establishing her worthiness to govern by emphasizing her personal accomplishments as queen.

II. ESTABLISHING SOVEREIGNTY: FEMININITY AND AUTHORITY

Elizabeth's speeches combine traditional notions of woman's subservience and the divine right of kings to establish her position as second only to God. The texts illustrate a masterful manipulation of these concepts as justification to rule. She uses figurative language to reinvent herself within the accepted order rather than disputing established belief in her references to religion and her political status. Elizabeth acknowledges that woman's status remains inferior to man's while elevating her own subservience through a direct relationship with God. She invokes the concept of divine right, effectively removing all people, including the entire male sex, from a status above her by linking her obedience directly to God in the established hierarchy.

Religion and politics of the sixteenth century were inseparable, as sovereigns had justified their rule by divine right for centuries. The established societal ideology was misogynistic, assigning females an inferior status based on biblical interpretation. Henricus Agrippa opposed this patriarchal tradition in his treatise, Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex: "But since the excessive tyranny of men prevails over divine right and natural law, the freedom that was once accorded to women is in our day obstructed by unjust laws, suppressed by custom and usage, reduced to nothing by education" (94-95). Existing laws and ideology empowered men and relegated women to a subservient status. Family structure designated males as the head and women as the body, representing a microcosm of the larger social-political order. Elizabeth was born into a society where her femininity was regarded as inferior.

Elizabeth ascended to the throne and carried the burden of reconciling her rank to her gender. She accomplished this task through figurative language that presented her femininity in a desirable light, illuminating the gentler aspects of her womanhood while diminishing her threat to the established male hierarchy.

Femininity and Religious Precedent

The political attitudes that threatened Elizabeth's power were supported by strict interpretation of biblical writings echoed in the works of contemporary Calvinistic writers. Her succession to the throne coincided with several treatises written to protest Mary Tudor's reign. Christopher Goodman and John Knox were two noteworthy authors who cited biblical precedent against a woman ruler.

Goodman expresses the prevailing male sentiment toward sovereigns in a 1558 treatise entitled How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed By Their Subjects:

The next rule to be observed is, that he should be one of their brethren, meaning of the Israelites: partly to exclude the oppression and idolatry, which comes in by strangers, as our country now is an example: and partly, for that strangers cannot bear such a natural zeal to strange realms and peoples, as becomes brethren: but chiefly to avoid that monster in nature, and disorder amongst men, which is the Empire and government of a woman, saying expressly: From the midst of your brethren shall you chose a king for yourself, and not amongst your sisters. For God is not contrary to Himself, which at the beginning appointed the woman to be in

subjection to her husband [Genesis 3:16], and the man to be head of the woman (as the Apostle says) who will not permit so much to the woman, as to speak in the Assembly of men [1 Corinthians 34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12], much less to be ruler of a realm or nation. If women are not permitted by civil policies to rule in inferior offices, to be Counselors, Peers of a realm, Justices, Sheriffs, Bailiffs, and such like: Make yourselves judges, whether it is mete for them to govern whole realms and nations? (D2v)

Goodman's explanation of Deuteronomy (and his other biblical references) expressly cites biblical word as the authority that subjugates women to an inferior status, not suitable to rule. He invokes the accepted belief that the man should be the head and the woman the body in regards to family structure. Deuteronomy does not specifically label women unfit to rule, rather inferring their exclusion by singularly mentioning men: "You may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother" (Deut 17:15, KJV). Whether the reference to "brothers" is confined to men or demonstrative of all Israelites is not so relevant as the fact that Deuteronomy does not make any judgment of woman's ability to rule. Goodman adds this opinion to the meaning he derives from the passage by pronouncing woman's inferiority obvious. He focuses on the omission of women with the phrase, "and not amongst your sisters," as opposed to citing specific language excluding them from selection. His extreme interpretation of this passage exemplifies the degree of misogyny that Elizabeth faced upon her accession to the throne.

John Knox displays greater hostility than Goodman in his attack on female sovereignty. His treatise, "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" proclaims that scripture alone proves that women should not rule men. He asserts that the testimony of scripture is so plain that "to add anything were superfluous, were it not that the world is almost now come to that blindness, that whatsoever pleases not the princes and the multitude, the same is rejected as doctrine newly forged, and is condemned for heresy" (390). Knox's numerous quotations reflect a considerable history of opposition to female rule, indicative of his detractors' expectations concerning classical citations and sources. He vehemently bases his fundamental argument on the authority vested in God's word: "For as I depend not upon the determinations of men, so I think my cause no weaker, albeit their authority is denied unto me; provided that God by his revealed will, and manifest word, stands plain and evident on my side" (400). Knox's focus is his interpretation of God's will as revealed in the Bible. He states that his argument is sound, even without patristic precedent. Melanie Hansen asserts that by repeated reference to the Scriptures, "Knox treated the Old Testament as a source text of legal precedents, that, in his view, inevitably transcended any national law" (12). Hansen addresses Knox's self-fashioning as an authority, based on his corroboration of sixteenth-century patriarchal beliefs with biblical precedent. She elaborates: "Knox's subject position is profoundly enigmatic: he positions himself as an authoritative speaker by means of his utilization of patriarchal commonplaces that advocate female silence in contradistinction to masculine speech, whilst also presenting himself as an anonymous author" (13). Hansen illustrates the

dichotomy evident in established religious belief versus the existence of a female monarch. Elizabeth's presence on England's throne creates a paradox, substantiated by Knox's decision to remain anonymous. He advocates feminine silence in deference to male speech while practicing silence through anonymity, validating Elizabeth's authority. Knox's anonymity reduces his treatise to the medium of hidden communication, a form typical of the private spaces of feminine authorship. This role reversal signifies the reality of Elizabeth's power; a woman rules while disapproving men hide.

Knox's decision to remain anonymous reveals his fear and provides Elizabeth with incentive to aggressively pursue her validation. Knox's reluctance to reveal himself would certainly motivate her to believe that her position could be justified. It is ironic that Knox publishes his treatise as a Protestant response to Mary Tudor's reign, only to have Elizabeth succeed to the throne at its publishing. Elizabeth's religious justifications for ruling are more formidable to his argument than Mary's.

Religious Justification versus Secular Rationale

Elizabeth has a great advantage in following Mary Tudor as England's monarch; she benefits directly from Mary's struggle as a woman ruling over men. Mary Tudor justified her reign by legal precedent, choosing to address misogynistic social ideology through the political arena. She passed an Act of Parliament in 1554, declaring a woman's constitutional right to the monarchy and for sovereign authority. The Act stated, "that the Regal Power of this Realm, is in the Queen's Majesty as fully and

absolutely as ever it was in any of her most noble Progenitors, Kings of this Realm” (Act Concerning the Regal Power, 122-24). Unlike Elizabeth, Mary did not invoke religious precedent to justify her authority; she chose a secular rationale. She cited her birthright as the daughter of Henry VIII and passed a law that declared her right to govern, avoiding the religious argument against female rule. The response from Mary’s detractors centered on her failure to cite biblical precedent for her authority to govern.

Elizabeth capitalizes on her observation of Mary’s struggle for authority. She incorporates popular religious argument with Mary’s secular ones to justify her rule. Her repeated religious rhetoric illustrates her understanding that any argument for female rule must answer the question of biblical precedent. Elizabeth establishes her personal connection to God, circumventing the religious argument intended to invalidate her authority. She redefines her status in gendered terms, aggressively positioning herself above the existing male hierarchy by divine designation. Mary had passively conformed to male expectations, presenting herself in a traditional feminine manner. Kathi Vosevich cites the differences between Mary and Elizabeth’s self-labeling in “The Education of a Prince[ss]”:

Mary refused to give up the title of princess until she was twenty years old and then only after her father wore her down. Even after she became queen, she often referred to herself as “princess”. Elizabeth, however, recognized the political efficacy of degendering or cross-gendering her title by calling herself “king,” something Mary never did. (61)

The difference between the two sovereign's image management not only arises in their use of rhetoric, but also in their boldness. Whereas Mary presented herself as the daughter of Henry, Elizabeth equates herself with him. Both women realize the necessity of justifying their authority; Elizabeth's advantage is her determination to overcome Mary's weaknesses. Vosevich elaborates:

Elizabeth, then, was better prepared for the throne than her sister had been. In addition to her better (oral) academic training, she also had the experience of watching Mary make mistakes. Mary herself had obviously been no stranger to adversity, but her experiences alone were not enough to prepare her to rule when her education had given her conflicting underpinnings that a "good Christian woman" was to be silent and submissive, and her councilors had shared these views. These were the same views that Elizabeth had to struggle against as sovereign, but she made use of her strong academic background to help her win this struggle by means of her rhetoric. (73)

Elizabeth's history as "second" to Mary provides her invaluable experience in the strategies of survival, as evidenced by her image management in her early letters. She repeatedly reassures Mary of her loyalty and love, stressing that she would never act against her half-sister. Elizabeth's fear of elimination on the basis of her threat to the Catholic crown is something that Mary never experienced. Elizabeth's hyper-vigilance under Mary's reign serves her well as monarch. She demonstrates the importance of proactively portraying herself in a favorable light to anyone who presents a threat.

Elizabeth is anything but silent and submissive by nature; she continually demonstrates her strong-willed character as well as her academic background to assert herself as worthy of the throne. Her proclamation to the troops at Tilbury, “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king” (Tudor, 326) is the foundation of her self-fashioning. Although she relies heavily on divine right to justify her position early in her reign, the reciprocity between her and Parliament form the basis of her power with the passing of time. Elizabeth nurtures this relationship by favoring the feminine gendered position in her discourse with them.

Subservience and Power

Elizabeth substantiates her power from a female perspective, validating her monarchy by vocalizing obedience to God and mitigating authority over Parliament through maternal language. She portrays her feminine characteristics as favorable to the requirements of sovereign power, stressing her particular female assets as qualification for a traditional male role. Mary Beth Rose states that Elizabeth “creates her public persona by monopolizing all gendered positions, taking rhetorical advantage of the special prestige of both female and male subject positions as these were understood in the Renaissance without consistently privileging either” (Gender and Heroism, 27). Elizabeth assumes all gendered positions but privileges the feminine by defining her qualifications for ruling. She validates her power through her obedience to God, assuming a superior position while simultaneously claiming a subservient one: “. . . if I were a milkmaid with a pail on mine arm, whereby my private person might be a

little set by, I would not forsake that single state to match myself with the greatest monarch" (Tudor, 170). She effectively privileges the feminine position by emphasizing her subservience to God, accepting her bequeathed status just as she would if a lesser rank were conferred upon her. Her reference to herself as a "milkmaid" conjures a vivid image of her in a feminine role of lower status; the phrase "with a pail on mine arm" intensifies the image, eliminating any doubt that she understands the expectations her male subjects have of the feminine position. Her use of the conditional "if" reminds her audience that she has not been assigned a lesser role in society, but that she would be obedient to that task as her feminine obligation requires. The inherent assertion Elizabeth makes is that she will be as faithful to her role as queen as she would to any that God would bestow on her. Her phrase "I would not forsake that single state to match myself with the greatest monarch" not only serves as a proclamation of her obedience to God, but also as a warning to any who would question her divine right as sovereign.

Elizabeth's justification of power through her subservience to God is also evident in her speech at the close of the Parliamentary session on March 16, 1576. She combines self-deprecation, acknowledgement of God, and gratitude for her relationship with Parliament. She assumes a feminine position, repeatedly attributing her power-base to God's will: "I cannot attribute this hap and good success to my device without detracting much from the divine Providence, nor challenge to my own commendation what is only due to His eternal glory. My sex permits it not" (168). She praises her success and presumes superior status, cloaking her power within God's glory.

Elizabeth shares credit with God for her successful reign by extolling her virtue as a woman; she glorifies her feminine qualities by affirming their benefit to the realm. Her language consistently reminds her audiences of her carefully defined relationship with them. She continually alludes to the limitations of her gender while reminding them of her status in relation to God. Although she could be acerbic in justifying her authority, she cultivates her relationship with her subjects through affectionate references to the love and caring between them. She assumes a softer tone in these lines.

Elizabeth proceeds to remind her audience of her female subservience while again proclaiming her success:

And for those rare and special benefits which many years have followed and accompanied my happy reign, I attribute to God alone, the Prince of rule, and count myself no better than his handmaid, rather brought up in a school to bide the ferula than traded in a kingdom to support the scepter. (169)

First she praises her success as ruler, then places the credit with God; immediately after, she reminds Parliament of her subservience as “God’s handmaid.” She finishes with a declaration that her success is a result of obeying established discipline rather than forcing her will on the kingdom. The teacher’s ferula, a rod used to discipline schoolchildren, becomes the symbol of her submission to an established order rather than a tool she uses to change it. In referring to herself as “his handmaid,” Elizabeth does not invert the feminine position but elevates her personal status with a shrewd interpretation of her position within the established hierarchy. She invokes the concept of divine right, effectively removing the entire male sex from a status above her by

linking her subservient position directly beneath God in the hierarchy. While continually praising God as the supreme authority, she repeatedly reminds her audience that she is designated second in command, an integral element in His blessing of them. She does not assert her authority directly, but rather through a close alliance to God as “His handmaid.”

Elizabeth’s reference to herself as God’s handmaid creates an image of servitude, effectively privileging her femininity by placing it in the highest position of submission; she prostrates herself before God while reminding Parliament that they also occupy a status subservient to Him. Her subservience is elevated by her personal proximity to the ultimate authority; the term handmaid signifies a one-on-one relationship. Elizabeth’s self-fashioning as God’s handmaid defines all other roles as lesser; she presumes power from the feminine position and diminishes Parliament’s by the arrangement she creates. Stephen Greenblatt defines the effect of Elizabeth’s image management in Renaissance Self-Fashioning: “Autonomy is an issue but not the sole or even the central issue: the power to impose a shape on oneself is an aspect of the more general power to control identity – that of others at least as often as one’s own” (1). Elizabeth’s self-definition imposes an identity on Parliament that is subservient to her own. A handmaid, like a Lady-in-Waiting, is a privileged attendant who enjoys an immediate and personal relationship with her patron. Elizabeth defines her position distinctively, securing her status as second to God’s. The images of handmaid and mother designate her feminine gendered position while securing her authority over all men. Her imagery also conjures gentle feminine images, mollifying the effect of her authoritative assertion.

Elizabeth reminds Parliament that their prosperity is a direct result of her direction under God: "These seventeen years God hath both prospered and protected you with good success under my direction, and I nothing doubt but the same maintaining hand will guide you still and bring you to the ripeness of perfection" (169). God's direction and Elizabeth's become blurred and indistinguishable from one another. The "same maintaining hand" can be construed as belonging to either of them, creating the image of God's hand and Elizabeth's as one and the same. Through her figurative language, Elizabeth has defined her feminine position directly under and ultimately equal to God's in relation to Parliament. She combines the concept of divine right with the established notion of female subservience to elevate her status above all men.

Reconciling Femininity and Authority

While Elizabeth establishes her authority through her submission to God, she maintains it through a carefully defined relationship with Parliament. She remains grounded in a feminine gendered position but distinguishes her sovereign duty from her womanhood. She argues that her responsibility to the state outweighs her obligation to bear children, yet agrees to consider Parliament's petition: "For though I think it best for a private woman, I strive with myself to think it not meet a prince. And if I can bend my liking to your need I will not resist such a mind" (79). Elizabeth separates her femininity from her body politic, disagreeing with Parliament but softening the impact by saying she will remain open to their request. Elizabeth differentiates herself from other women by emphasizing the responsibility that comes with the title of prince. She strategically

signifies her hierarchical position by defining her relationship to God and that identity defines her in relation to Parliament. Elizabeth establishes Parliament's identity by defining her own.

Elizabeth begins her reign separated from her subjects by divine right, and later moves toward reciprocity with them as her source of power. She claims God's authority as her own in the first line of her first speech to Parliament: “. . . considering I am God's creature, ordained to obey His appointment, I will thereto yield, desiring from the bottom of my heart that I may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His heavenly will in this office now committed to me” (51-52). In her very first utterance to Parliament, Elizabeth sets up the dichotomy that will form the basis of her image. She portrays herself as a woman subservient to the highest male authority, providing her a status superior to all other men.

Elizabeth's speeches successfully reconcile her femininity and authority by defining her relationship to God; she favors the feminine gendered position as subservient to Him. She elevates her status through her subservience to God, redefining her authority as well as Parliament's, whose status is reduced by her self-definition. Elizabeth also validates her authority over men through the role of mother, utilizing their childhood familiarity with maternal authority. Elizabeth assumes all positions from the feminine perspective, presenting them in a manner that is familiar and comfortable to men. She even refers to her womanhood when calling herself king at Tilbury, redefining her body in both feminine and masculine terms.

Elizabeth designates herself as a female proxy for a male position, cleverly alluding to Plowden's concept of the king's two bodies.¹ Edmund Plowden is a sixteenth-century Elizabethan lawyer whose Reports (1571) has been considered the main Elizabethan source for the metaphor of the king's two bodies. Plowden writes:

For the King has in him two bodies, viz., a body natural, and a body politic. His body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a body moral, subject to all infirmities that come by nature or accident, to the imbecility of infancy or old age, and to the like defects that happen to the bodies of other people. But his body politic is a body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of policy and government, and constituted for the direction of the people, and the management of the public weal, and this body is utterly void of infancy, and old age, and other natural defects and imbecilities, which the body natural is subject to, and for this cause, what the king does in his body politic cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any disability in his natural body. (1571)

Plowden's Reports is a response to a legal controversy; he asserts that a king's body natural is indivisible from his body politic, and the body politic never dies. When a king dies, the body politic migrates to the body natural of the succeeding king. A monarch is always referred to as king even if a woman ruled. Elizabeth capitalizes on this analysis by incorporating her 'weak and feeble body' with 'the heart and stomach of a king',

¹ Ernst Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1957) 7.

alluding to Plowden's assertion that the king's body natural is "subject to all infirmities that come by nature or accident". In this case, Elizabeth's describes her female body as an infirmity while reminding her audience that her body politic is the same as any king. Her body politic is immune to any disability in her natural body, making her sex irrelevant. She represents herself as a pure body politic, a queen who transcends her natural body and becomes the incarnation of the state.

Elizabeth Tudor evokes the concepts of woman's subservience and divine right to establish her position as England's monarch, justifying her power by cloaking her authority within God's. She diminishes her threat to the established male hierarchy by defining herself as God's handmaid and Parliament's mother, dispensing His authority for their protection. She separates her femininity from the monarchy through Plowden's concept of the king's two bodies, claiming that she transcends her natural body to become the incarnation of the state.

Elizabeth reveals herself through figurative language as an exceptional woman whose subservience to God led her to power, and whose maternal relationship with Parliament has made England prosperous. She justifies her authority by redefining her femininity through subservience and maternal care.

III. DEFERRING MARRIAGE: DIVINITY AND RECIPROCITY

Elizabeth's response to Parliament's petition that she marry and assure her succession illustrates how she turns the perceived liabilities of her gender into an asset. She defines her sovereignty through her imagery of submission, virginity, and reciprocity, signifying God's authority as her own. Elizabeth responds first as a woman, establishing her succession to the throne through her submission to God. She then labels herself a virgin queen, empowering her femininity through divine imagery and elevating her status above the existing hierarchy. She sustains sovereign power through her reciprocity with Parliament, redefining their relationship through maternal imagery. Elizabeth validates her sovereignty by citing her personal accomplishments within the dialogue of reciprocity. By reiterating her history of care and protection to Parliament, she authorizes her experience as justification for a continued relationship.

Elizabeth's strategy redefines the monarch's power as an exchange rather than as an absolute. Throughout her reign, she reinforces a hierarchical relationship between God, herself, and Parliament, always stressing her position as subservient to God and elevated above men. Elizabeth paradoxically disembodies her feminine self from her traditionally male role of monarch through female positioning. She fashions a relationship to God as His handmaid and to Parliament as a loving mother, yet her authority as "prince" remains independent of both, enveloped in the concept of the body politic.

Elizabeth's justifications for remaining unmarried, her chastising of Parliament for telling her she should be married, and the manner in which she places the responsibility for her decision directly on their safety demonstrate her mastery of figurative language. She presents her greatest priority to be her subjects' well being, a responsibility she incurs by her obedience to divine direction. Her speeches regarding marriage and succession illuminate the dangerous uncertainty surrounding England's state religion and establish Elizabeth's status within the accepted religious parameters of her time.

Subservience to God

In her first speech before Parliament on February 10, 1559, Elizabeth immediately addresses the petitions from the lower house concerning her marriage: "I first had consideration of myself to be born a servitor of almighty God, I happily chose this kind of life in which I yet live, which I assure you for mine own part hitherto best contented myself and I trust hath been most acceptable to God" (56). Her first statement to Parliament identifies her as God's servant, followed closely by a declaration of His part in her status: "With which trade of life I am so thoroughly acquainted that I trust God, who hath hitherto therein preserved and led me by the hand, will not now of His goodness suffer me to go alone" (57). Elizabeth begins her self-fashioning by creating a position second to God and stressing her subservience to Him. She conjures an image of humility and contentment as a "servitor of almighty God," fostering a presumption that she would gladly remain a subject of the realm. Elizabeth tells Parliament that "I happily chose this kind of life in which I yet live,"

reassuring them that she has chosen a life of service to God and will not abandon that commitment as monarch. She credits God for her sovereignty by claiming that He “led me by the hand,” inferring that self-will had no part in her reign. Elizabeth defines subservience to God as an integral part of her identity, establishing a foundation for her place in the social order. God’s authority is the foundation of hers, granting her sovereignty through her subservience to Him. Her statement that God “will not now of His goodness suffer me to go alone” specifies her weakness in relation to Him, reminding Parliament that she is only queen because of divine providence and not ambition. Since Elizabeth’s self-definition is grounded in her femininity, the discussion of marriage requires that she respond as a woman first and monarch second.

Femininity and Divine Right

Elizabeth responds first as a woman, claiming her position by divine right through subservience to God. Immediately after explaining her relationship to God, she asserts her sovereign authority with an admonition to Parliament:

Nevertheless, if any of you be in suspect that, whensoever it may please God to incline my heart to another way of life, ye may well assure yourselves my meaning is not to do or determine anything wherewith the realm may or shall have just cause to be disconnected. And therefore put that clean out of your heads. (57)

Elizabeth quickly designates the political order as God, herself, and Parliament. She defines her sovereignty as God-given, her femininity through her submission to His will,

and her authority through her warning to Parliament. Steven Greenblatt describes this self-definition in “Renaissance Self-Fashioning”: “Self-fashioning for such figures involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self – God, a sacred book, an institution such as the church, court, colonial or military administration” (9). Submission is the key ingredient to this strategy’s success. The person signifying their position outside of the original order must establish their new position in some other existing structure perceived to be greater than the first one. Elizabeth identifies her position outside of the existing male hierarchy by her submission to God, who is recognized as superior by Parliament.

Self-fashioning allows Elizabeth to redefine this hierarchy in relation to her own position with the intent of disarming its power against her. Greenblatt elaborates: “Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange or hostile. The threatening Other – heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist – must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed” (Greenblatt, 9). Elizabeth designates the opposing forces against her rule, internal and external, as a threat to the safety of England. She defines her monarch’s status as God-given, for the direct purpose of protecting England against that threat. Elizabeth assures Parliament of her commitment against this threat: “I will never in that matter conclude anything that shall be prejudicial to the realm, for the weal, good, and safety whereof I will never shame to spend my life” (57). This statement unites Elizabeth’s authority with the protection of England, and declares her complete commitment to both. She cites the security of the realm as her greatest priority, taking precedent over all other matters. By emphasizing

national security to be paramount, Elizabeth decreases the importance of her marriage. She states that she would give her life for England's safety, and the underlying message is that her resolve against marrying for Parliament's sake is equally as great.

Virginity and Empowerment

Elizabeth completes her posturing by declaring herself a virgin queen: "And in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin" (58). The comparison to the Virgin Mary, mother of God, is an inevitable result of this figurative language. More importantly, Elizabeth's status as a virgin reflects her personal preference not to share the power of the throne with anyone. Her self-portrayal as "The Virgin Queen" transforms her from the illegitimate daughter of a king into the virgin Gloriana, empowering her as a sacred deliverer of her people. Her virginity implies that she can only love or be married to her people or to the state of England. Because she is female, it is imperative that she emphasize her gender with superlative imagery. As a virgin queen, Elizabeth dispatches the role of subservience by attaching it directly to God, allowing her the freedom to answer her male petitioners as their monarch. She does not have to usurp a male gendered position to assert her authority because God's delegation of authority to her is sufficient.

Elizabeth's self-fashioning as virgin queen empowers her femininity with imagery of the divine. She aligns herself with God through subservience, cloaking herself in divinity by appropriating a stature equal to the Virgin Mary. Her female form becomes

the basis of her power, manifested through her transformation from Elizabeth Tudor into England's virgin queen. Elizabeth does not deny her femininity but elevates it to a divine stature, redefining herself first as God's handmaid, then as an incarnation of the Virgin Mary. Louis Montrose explains the result of this connection in "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text":

An emphasis on the virginity of that royal body transforms the problem of the monarch's gender into the very source of her potency. The inviolability of the island realm, the secure boundary of the English nation, is thus made to seem mystically dependent upon the inviolability of the English sovereign, upon the intact condition of the queen's body natural. (315)

Montrose alludes to Elizabeth's inherent reference to the king's two bodies, wherein she transfers the ideology of a monarch's dual physical and divine existence to her own purpose. She elevates her status above her physical state, subsequently adopting a higher level of responsibility to match it. She abdicates her natural duty to marry and perpetuate her line for a politic duty to the state, where her virginity ensures no interference with her sovereign obligations. Elizabeth's virgin image transforms her submission to God into divinity, elevating her femininity beyond compliance to normal social expectations.

Elizabeth fuses her virginity to the state as a natural response to the religious argument that her unmarried status contradicts God's will. She reinvents herself as a virgin and joins her virginity to the divine, elevating her celibacy beyond the reach of religious and social expectations. Elizabeth's identification with the Virgin Mary

envelops her in a supernatural aura, exempting her from an ordinary woman's responsibility to marry and bear children. Mary Beth Rose explains Reformation ideology on celibacy: "Protestantism, newly and vehemently idealizing marriage, had gone about opposing celibacy as unnatural and thus inferior to faithful married love" ("The Gendering of Authority" 1079). Elizabeth counters that God's will for her is to "trade" the object of her wifely duties for the good of the realm, fulfilling that role through the body politic rather than the body natural. This exchange is made possible by her elevation to divine status, unburdening her from the mundane duties of other women. Elizabeth redefines her femininity as unique, separating it from the expectations of existing religious ideology toward women.

Elizabeth never forgets the social expectations of her feminine body, vocalizing her awareness that her duty as a woman is to marry and produce an heir: "And therefore I say again I will marry as soon as I can conveniently . . . And I hope to have children; otherwise I never would marry" (95). She never strays far from this position, always surrounding her authoritative voice with a conciliatory tone. Her statement that she will marry when convenient reminds Parliament that their safety is first; she remains unmarried because her subservience to God's will overrules her duty as a woman. Elizabeth fashions herself as a woman first, God's handmaid second, and finally as England's virgin queen. By connecting her femininity to the divine, she avoids sharing power and resists pressure to produce an heir. The source of her power is God and the connection is her subservience. Elizabeth is mystically transformed from a woman into

a manifestation of divinity on earth through her submission to divine will. She is reborn as Gloriana, God's virgin protector of England.

Elizabeth does not disclaim her femininity, but separates it from her body politic through her use of divine imagery. She reinvents herself in a manner that connects her personally to God, using figurative language that invites an inevitable comparison to the Virgin Mary. Her varied manifestations of her femininity enable her to protect her sovereign authority and to redefine the existing misogynistic hierarchy, elevating her to a status second only to God.

Reciprocity with Parliament

The first challenge to the monarchy's absolute rule occurs at Runnymede in 1215, where the English Barons force John I to sign the Magna Carta,² which states, among other things, that a king cannot raise taxes without their consent. The first Parliament is eventually formed for the purpose of levying taxes, and its authority under monarchs preceding the Tudor dynasty is generally limited to final consent for any new tax levied by a king. Under Henry VIII, the dispute over final authority centers on the monarch's jurisdiction over all legal matters, religious and secular. Henry's divorce becomes final without Papal consent, but the resulting confusion between religious and secular authority creates a problem for Henry's successors. Elizabeth is forced to negotiate with Parliament, relying on their reciprocity to support her authority.

² David Hume, The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1983) 318.

While Elizabeth establishes her authority through her submission to God, she maintains it through a carefully nurtured relationship with Parliament. She remains grounded in a feminine gendered position, asserting her authority through the maternal imagery of love and care: "And so I assure you all that though after my death you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any more mother than I mean to be unto you all" (72). Elizabeth proclaims that her role is the care and protection of her subjects and that their role is to love her as a mother. Her rhetoric reminds Parliament of her designation as their protector, sustaining a status direct in line after God's. She reinforces a hierarchy where God is first, she is second, and Parliament is third. She frames her princely authority in a maternal relationship with them, adopting a positive, socially accepted feminine role. Elizabeth reassures Parliament through her use of the future tense, declaring England will never have "any more mother than I mean to be." She promises a successful future through her maternal guidance, redefining their relationship as an exchange of care and protection, rather than an absolute rule. Early in her reign, Elizabeth tells Parliament that "every one of you, and as many as are English, are my children," (59) declaring herself mother to all of her subjects, including Parliament. She declares her maternal love, and ultimately her maternal authority, to all of the English people. This declaration enables Elizabeth to assert her sovereign power while acknowledging that her authority depends on Parliament's loyalty, initiating the eventual shift from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one.

Establishing sovereign authority through divine right enables Elizabeth to secure her control of the English monarchy, but her continued maintenance of power relies

more on her reciprocity with parliament with the passing of time. She recognizes the importance of protecting her status against the misogynist ideology that has persisted for centuries. Elizabeth is proactive in reconciling her femininity to her sovereignty. She consistently reinforces her authority from a feminine position, choosing to present herself as a mother figure to parliament. This strategy enables her to keep her femininity at the center of her rationale for power, while evoking the most acceptable image of feminine authority familiar to her male subjects.

Toward the end of her reign, Elizabeth depends more on maternal self-fashioning than divine imagery to maintain her control over the realm. She recreates Parliament as her ally in ruling England by defining herself as the recipient of their devotion. Her self-depiction as a maternal figure redefines Parliament's identity as childlike by comparison, ensuring her the dominant role in their relationship. She anticipates any assertion of power against her dominance through figurative language that continually reminds Parliament of her love and care for her subjects. Elizabeth redefines any question of her authority into a statement of concern for her well being, transforming conflict into a dialogue of reciprocity between herself and Parliament.

Maternal Imagery and the Body Politic

Elizabeth defers Parliament's insistence that she marry by signifying her role as protector and their petition as an expression of concern for her. By establishing herself as the recipient of their care, she is able to redefine the conflict over marriage and succession through maternal imagery. She reinforces a non-hostile relationship with

the imagery of reciprocity, turning a potential power struggle into a dialogue. Her response is filled with frequent references to her womanhood, a tactic that illustrates her awareness of the importance of a gendered position. Elizabeth states that she does not want to answer hastily, because a careless answer would be detrimental to the realm:

If he, a common man, but in matters of school took such delay the better to show his eloquent tale, great cause may justly move me in this, so great a matter touching the benefits of this realm and the safety of you all, to defer mine answer till some other time, wherein I assure you the consideration of my own safety (although I thank you for the great care that you seem to have thereof) shall be little in comparison of that great regard that I mean to have of the safety and surety of you all. (72)

Elizabeth deftly explains her motives in hesitating to answer Parliament's petition that she marry, citing her role as protector and thanking them for their care towards her. Referencing Parliament's "great care" for her allows Elizabeth to redefine their petition as an expression of concern rather than a mandate. She channels their anxiety over succession into a personalized expression of love for their queen. She subsequently reinforces her role as their protector through the maternal imagery of her care for them.

Elizabeth alludes to her womanhood before responding directly to Parliament's petition, reassuring them that she is aware of the social expectations placed on her: "The weight and greatness of this matter might cause in me, being a woman wanting both wit and memory, some fear to speak and bashfulness besides, a thing appropriate to my sex" (70). Elizabeth's mentions her female sex, first to acknowledge her

acceptance of established gender ordering, then to soften the conflict between Parliament and herself through repeated references to their caring relationship. She describes her weaknesses as “a thing appropriate to my sex,” creating the foundation of her relationship with them. She addresses them as a woman, acknowledging the feminine impropriety of speaking publicly and illuminating her self-deprecating wit as her next words prove her intention to do the opposite. Elizabeth gently nurtures a loving relationship with Parliament through a soft tone, framing the forceful argument to follow. She moves to an authoritative voice when finally responding to their petition: “But yet the princely seat and kingly throne wherein God (though unworthy) hath constituted me, maketh these two causes little in mine eyes, though grievous perhaps to your ears, and boldeneth me to say somewhat in this matter, which I mean only to touch but not presently to answer” (70). Elizabeth’s shift from a feminine voice to an authoritative one signifies her transition from a body natural to a body politic. She addresses Parliament as a woman first, then invokes the princely authority of the throne to answer. She does not directly label herself a prince here, but refers to “the princely seat and kingly throne” that she occupies. She separates her femininity from the power of the throne, subsequently disconnecting her natural body from the body politic.

Through figurative language Elizabeth integrates the various aspects of herself as a woman, virgin, mother, and prince into a foundation for authority, drawing from each as needed. She utilizes her various incarnations to justify her rule and operate from a feminine position. She claims that she speaks with authority only because

God has constituted her body politic and ordained her as sovereign. She notes that she is unworthy but subservient to God's will, aligning her femininity with the concept of divine right. She transforms her womanhood into a platform for authority through maternal language that bridges the two. She designates herself as the recipient of Parliament's care, defining their position in relation to her. Elizabeth's refashioning of their relationship creates an exchange in which Parliament reciprocates her protection with loyalty and affection. The result of this exchange is a validation of her authority as their monarch, reinforced by Parliament's acceptance of her maternal care.

Elizabeth exercises this authority in a speech to a joint delegation of Lords and Commons given on November 5, 1566. She voices her displeasure at their persistence that she marry: "I marvel not much that bridleless colts do not know their rider's hand, whom bit of kingly rein did never snaffle yet" (93). Here it is first apparent that Elizabeth assumes the male-gendered role of authority, as the comparison of her and Parliament to rider and colt conjures a powerful image of her mastery. However, true to her form, Elizabeth quickly reminds Parliament of the relationship she has fashioned between them: "For we think and know you have just cause to love us, considering our mercifulness showed to all subjects since our reign" (94). Typically, Elizabeth reminds Parliament of the basis of their relationship; she has been designated monarch by God, yet their relationship is grounded in love. She tells them that they have good reason to love her, since she has been a merciful sovereign. Elizabeth's language moves her toward absolute power; she ensures continuity with Parliament by perpetuating a maternal position in their relationship.

Elizabeth frames her sovereign authority with her womanhood and her maternal concern for Parliament, creating a platform from which to assert her opinion freely. Having established a status directly beneath God and above men, she addresses them as a mother would speak to her children. She sternly reminds them that she rescued them from Mary Tudor's Catholicism: "I am neither careless or unmindful of your case, as I trust you likewise do not forget that by me you were delivered whilst you were hanging on the bough ready to fall into the mud – yea, to be drowned in the dung" (72). Elizabeth depicts Parliament dangling above the excrement, facing a slow death only after wallowing in it for a time, and proclaiming that she alone saved Protestant England from certain extinction. She evokes a graphic image of Parliament's fate had she not succeeded the throne. "The dung" Elizabeth refers to is Mary's Catholic rule and papal authority, which is the threatening "other" from which she alone can offer protection. Although her speech is framed with reference to her feminine gender and maternal care, she asserts that she is the anointed protector, and that without her there would be no status to protect.

Elizabeth follows her admonition with a characteristic return to a softer, maternal tone, reminding Parliament of their relationship. She frames her authoritative voice with the language of reciprocity, assuring Parliament that she will be "more of a mother" (72) than any queen that will follow her. She raises the imagery of her maternal imagery to a superlative level, stating that no woman will ever surpass her commitment to Parliament. Having elevated her femininity to a divine status, Elizabeth now emphasizes her reciprocity with Parliament to the same degree, shifting her gendered position from virgin to mother. She cloaks her authority with exceptional imagery, portraying herself as a

special woman, virgin and mother. She repeatedly assumes a feminine gendered position, exemplifying her personal excellence in every role she constructs for herself. Elizabeth defines her femininity through powerful incarnations that enhance her divine connection and her maternal relationship with Parliament, always enveloping and protecting her sovereign authority. She begins by listing her deficiencies and assuming a reverent posture, while her closing remarks are commanding, protective, and maternal. She consistently fashions herself in feminine terms but moves to language that redefines her gender with authoritative imagery.

Elizabeth cultivates her manifestations of divinity and reciprocity throughout her reign. She never strays from using figurative language that portrays her as virgin queen and mother. Mary Beth Rose speculates that Elizabeth abandons her tactic of maternal imagery after her early speeches because of the argument's impractical application: "The direct evocation of queen as mother was far more likely to provoke anxiety than to provide reassurance" ("Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare?" 291). Rose asserts that Elizabeth abandons this strategy because her self-portrayal as an aging mother deflates the power prevalent in her prime. I disagree with Rose and argue that Elizabeth promotes a maternal image throughout her life, relying less on divine right and more on her relationship with Parliament in the latter years of her reign. She directs less energy toward this argument not because age betrays her intent, but in favor of other manifestations pertinent to her purposes.

Although Elizabeth refrains from directly referring to herself as mother in later speeches, she uses the language of reciprocity to reinforce her maternal image. She explicitly defines this reciprocal love as parental in her speech at Oxford in 1592:

Your merits are not the exceptional and notable praises (unmerited by me) that you have given me; nor orations of many and various kinds eruditely and notably expressed; but another thing which is much more precious and more excellent: namely a love that has never been heard nor written nor known in the memory of man. Of this, parents lack any example; neither does it happen among familiar friends; no nor among lovers, in whose fate faithfulness is not always included, as experience itself teaches. (327)

Elizabeth specifically connects the love she has fashioned between herself and her subjects to a familial relationship, saying, “of this, parents lack any example.” She differentiates this love from all others, declaring it unique in its characteristics, most notably faithfulness. Elizabeth identifies her role in the reciprocity between herself and her subjects as specifically parental, reinforcing her imagery of love as maternal by this definition. By isolating this type of love as specific to parents, she perpetuates her maternal image through consistent references to its practice by herself and Parliament.

The success of Elizabeth’s strategy is illustrated in Parliament’s acceptance of their relationship as she has defined it, referring several times to her “most gracious and motherly care,” (73) and her “most honorable and motherly carefulness” (76). Stephen Greenblatt’s observation that “the power to impose a shape upon oneself is an aspect of

the more general power to control identity” (1) applies to Parliament in their response to Elizabeth’s self-definition as a mother figure. Parliament’s reciprocation to Elizabeth indicates an acceptance of her definition and a subsequent relegation to the role she has assigned them. Mary Beth Rose acknowledges that although Elizabeth does not directly refer to herself as a mother after 1563, “she presents herself as nurturer and caretaker” (Gender and Heroism 33). Because she has specifically defined her imagery of love between herself and the English people as parental, Elizabeth no longer needs to refer to herself as mother. She relies instead on the imagery of reciprocity, which she has connected to her motherhood in her speech at Oxford.

Elizabeth’s consistent use of maternal imagery is evidenced by her Golden Speech, which she gave in 1601 at the age of 68. This speech contains the same dual imagery that reinforces the role she created in her first speech to Parliament, portraying her as a faithful servant of God and a loving mother to her subjects. Elizabeth’s return to language positioning her as intermediary between God and her subjects illustrates the greater strategy that frames her entire reign. The Golden Speech summarizes this relationship and reveals Elizabeth’s method of substantiating her authority from a feminine gendered position:

For myself I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a King or royal authority of a Queen as delighted that God hath made me his instrument to maintain his truth and glory and to defend his kingdom as I said from peril, dishonour, tyranny and oppression. There will never Queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care to my subjects and that

will sooner with willingness venture her life for your good and safety than myself. For it is my desire to live nor reign no longer than my life and reign shall be for your good. And though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will be more careful and loving. (339-340)

She refers to herself as king, queen and prince, eliminating any distinction of titles by connecting them all to herself and her reign. She disclaims the importance of gender to empower it, validating her sovereignty through personal history and experience. She describes herself as God's servant, protector of England, and sole defender against the "threatening other," specifically the forces that would destroy the realm. Her imagery reinforces her association with God and her maternal relationship with Parliament, reminding them once again of her role as intermediary. By intertwining her imagery of princely authority with her gratitude for the opportunity to serve God, Elizabeth establishes her role of king while retaining the benefit of her femininity. She reinforces her body politic through God's authority and uses her womanhood to endear herself to Parliament. She connects her femininity to her authority by divine right, designating herself the instrument of God's power. She does not assert her divinity directly, but speaks of her delight that God "made" her "his instrument," defining her authority as the result of divine will. She speaks more of her relationship with Parliament, stressing it as the most important aspect of her rule. Elizabeth always refers to her association with God first, then emphasizes her love for her subjects as her greatest priority. Her fluid movement from divinity to

reciprocity enables her to establish God's initiation of her authority while inferring that her relationship with Parliament is the foundation of her success.

Elizabeth speaks of her gratitude for being chosen to rule, her patriotism for England, and the care and love she holds for her subjects. She expresses humility when comparing herself to other rulers, indicating her awareness of the public limitations her sex imposes on her. Her self-deprecating wit is evidenced by her use of the word "prince" when accentuating her place in history. She downplays her status in relation to male monarchs in order to include herself among them, eliminating the stigma associated with her femininity. She emphasizes her relationship with her subjects, reinforcing her maternal authority over them. Elizabeth ultimately validates her power through her personal experience as monarch, protecting her humanistic justification with divine and reciprocal imagery. She envelops her authority in layers of validation, sheathing her personal experience within her relationship to Parliament, which in turn is framed by her role as God's delegate to them.

Feminine Experience and Authority

Elizabeth's reliance on personal experience is prevalent throughout her reign, substantiated by repeated references within the dialogue of reciprocity. She envelops her authority within layers of justification, starting with her divine connection and working inward toward her personal achievements. She reveals her accomplishments with dialogue celebrating her relationship with Parliament, citing evidence of her care and protection. Elizabeth defines Parliament's care by fashioning herself as its recipient,

citing the danger to her as the catalyst. She stresses the danger to herself while the question of succession remains unresolved, declaring that she has more to lose than Parliament:

I know as well as I did before that I am mortal. I know also that I must seek to discharge myself of that great burden that God hath laid upon me, for of them to whom much is committed, much is required . . . For I know that this matter toucheth me much nearer than it doth you all, who if the worst happen can lose but your bodies . . . I hazard to lose both body and soul. (71)

Elizabeth weighs the danger to her against the danger to Parliament and explains that she bears the greater risk because of her responsibility to God. She implies a sacred trust between God and herself, explaining that the consequences of defying Him will jeopardize her soul. This imagery strengthens the hierarchy she has established by separating her and God from Parliament. Her responsibility lies on a level above them; Parliament is not privy to that level of decision-making. She reminds Parliament that she is still God's instrument and that her primary responsibility is their safety. Her self-description has defined them as recipients of God's grace through her guidance. Elizabeth legitimizes her femininity by redefining it through her maternal obligation to protect Parliament.

Elizabeth articulates accepted ideology surrounding feminine weaknesses to accent her uniquely exceptional proficiency in them. The manner in which she announces her female ineptitude disproves it; her eloquence in disclaiming eloquence is her message. Jennifer Summit describes this ability to create authority from a female-gendered place: "A female monarch who was required to assert her authority in the male-gendered medium of

oratory inhabited a paradox-ridden position . . . one of the tactics that Elizabeth deployed to authorize her own public speaking was to invoke and perform the very restrictions that humanism would place on her" (167). Rather than declare a litany of exceptional God-given talents to justify her rule, Elizabeth inverts accepted social notions of femininity by violating them. She decries her lack of value, capacity and achievement for the purpose of accentuating them; the result is self-glorification of her personal abilities, in which she justifies God's delegation of authority to her. Although she attributes God with all her achievements, Elizabeth's eloquent language actually de-emphasizes the godly and accentuates her own capability to her audience.

Elizabeth verbally surrenders her feminine self to God, crediting Him with her directive to rule. She justifies her transition from the body natural to the body politic through subservience to Him. The authorial voice in her speeches alienates her feminine self from her role as prince and king, while she relies on her femininity as the basis of her relationship with Parliament. Elizabeth asserts her authority directly and forcefully within the framework of this relationship: "Was I not born in the realm? Were my parents born in any foreign country? Is there any cause I should alienate myself from being careful over this country? Is not my kingdom here? . . . I need not to use many words, for my deeds do try me" (95). Having reminded Parliament of their relationship, Elizabeth switches attention to her role as monarch, reminding them that her first concern is the safety of her kingdom. Paradoxically, she exercises a humanistic tactic to inspire Parliament's trust through her achievements. She validates her succession

through her birthright as Henry's daughter, then reinforces her continued reign through her personal experience and attributes.

Elizabeth responds to the second petition that she name a successor to the crown with the same paradoxical strategy, reiterating that her sovereignty is the result of obedience to God. Her justification for absolute rule is her personal experience and accomplishments since becoming queen: "It is said I am no divine. Indeed, I studied nothing else but divinity till I came to the crown, and then I gave myself to the study of that which was meet for government" (96). Elizabeth rebuts the argument that the divine right of kings is limited to males. First she notes her study of divine matters in her youth, then reinforces her imperial obligation to study sovereign politics after becoming queen. Her statement infers deference to the body natural before ruling and to the body politic on becoming queen. She again separates and disembodies her feminine self from her rule; subservience has led to her succession and sovereign obligation validates her authority.

Elizabeth presents her argument twice, first in a whimsical tone and later forcefully: "The second point was the limitation of the succession of the crown, wherein was nothing said for my safety, but only for themselves. A strange thing that the foot should direct the head in so weighty a matter (96). Her first warning to Parliament that they are violating her hierarchy includes the observation that they are remiss in only voicing their fears for themselves, saying nothing of Elizabeth's precarious position. Elizabeth reminds Parliament of their reciprocal relationship, inferring that she expects love and obedience in return for her protection. Her use of the phrase "a strange thing" softens the impact of her admonition that Parliament is violating their status in relation to her. Her use of language

is capricious, offsetting the seriousness of her accusation. She appears to muse about why they would forget the position they occupy in relation to her.

After citing multiple reasons why Parliament should understand her reasoning in the matter, Elizabeth admonishes them more forcefully. She has presented her grievance within the parameters of maternal care and now asserts the authority she has established:

But as soon as there be a convenient time and that it be done with least peril to you, although never without great danger to me, I will deal therein for your safety and offer it unto you as your prince and head, without request. For it is monstrous that the feet should direct the head. (98)

Her second rebuke is more severe, declaring it “monstrous” rather than “strange” that Parliament should question her. Elizabeth shifts her imagery from that of a hurt mother to an angry monarch, justifying authority and then asserting it aggressively. She then tells Parliament that she will consider their request when it is safe to do so, reiterating that there will always be danger to her. She states that she will consider their wishes at her own peril, but from an authoritative position as their “prince and head”. She precedes and follows her assertion of princely authority from a feminine gendered position, moving in and out of her body politic to protect it with maternal imagery. Elizabeth capitulates that she is open to consider their petition when her kingly obligation to their safety is satisfied, respecting the social ideology that her feminine self is indebted to them.

In between the softer intonations of her feminine-gendered positions, Elizabeth invokes the continuation of the body politic, directly warning Parliament that it has passed on to her from her father: “and though I be a woman, yet I have as good a courage

answerable to my place as ever my father had. I am your anointed queen" (97). She declares her authority as a prince, based on the concept of the king's two bodies. The precept that the body politic passes on to a monarch's heirs, even after the body natural withers and dies, separates a sovereign's human frailty from the unseen body of policy and government and cannot be invalidated. Even in the midst of invoking immortal power, Elizabeth retreats quickly to a feminine position: "I thank God that I am indeed endued with such qualities that if I were turned out of the realm in my petticoat, I were able to live in any place in Christendom" (97). She never strays far from the self-fashioning that commands Parliament's loyalty, being quick to remind them that she possesses all the attributes that constitute a Christian woman's role in English society. She proclaims that outside of her position as head of state she remains a woman, subservient to and mindful of social expectations. Her use of the word "petticoat" explicitly confirms her commitment to the established order; the exception she maintains is her place at the top of it, which exempts her from the obligations of ordinary women.

Parliament begrudgingly accepts her response, as illustrated by the secretary's report to the House of Commons: "And at this present she could use no other mean to satisfy the doubtful but with the word of a prince, which being in so public a place ought not to be mistrusted" (99). The message relayed to the lower house denotes the precarious nature of Elizabeth's strategy; the negative nature of the translation reveals their tenuous acceptance of her rationale. The phrase "she could use no other mean to satisfy the doubtful" indicates that Parliament does not fully embrace Elizabeth's argument.

Parliament's doubt is grounded in their fear that Elizabeth's hesitation to produce a Protestant heir will create an opportunity for a Catholic monarch to succeed her. Elizabeth argues that the consequences of a marriage would present a greater danger to the realm than the surety of succession, due to the current political and religious uncertainty. Mary, Queen of Scots gave birth to James in June 1566, and it is assumed that the Scottish heir apparent will be raised in the Catholic faith. The birth of James adds pressure to the question of marriage and succession and the accelerating argument ultimately culminates in Elizabeth dissolving Parliament. The temerity of this action is reinforced by precise language reflecting her careful self-fashioning.

When Elizabeth dissolves Parliament in January of 1567, she speaks as a prince and does not directly refer to her womanhood. Her explanation for their dismissal reinforces her earlier arguments, which culminate from her carefully crafted maternal self-fashioning: "I love so evil counterfeiting and hate so much dissimulation that I may not suffer you depart without that my admonitions may show your harms and cause you shun unseen peril" (105). Elizabeth tells Parliament that she is circumventing the imminent danger created by the conflict over marriage and succession. She says that she hopes that Parliament understands the reason for her reprimand, and does not miss the lesson she imparts. She mollifies Parliament by claiming to expose the danger rather than implement punishment for disobedience.

The queen tells Parliament that their reason is clouded by their fear of who will succeed her and what will happen to their status: "Two visors have blinded the eyes of lookers-on in this present session, so far in the pretense of saving all they have done none

good. And these be: succession and liberties” (105). She returns to her maternal role by explaining that she sees what they cannot, and gives them two reasons for her action. Her words next remind them that her authority as prince is unquestionable: “As to the first, the prince’s opinion and good will ought to in good order have been felt in other sort than in so public a place be uttered” (105). Her argument relies on her status as the body politic and head of state, affirming that a prince’s word must not be questioned, especially in public. She says, “As to liberties, who is so simple that doubts whether a prince is head of all the body may not command the feet to stray when they would slip? God forbid that your liberty should make my bondage or that your lawful liberties should any ways have been infringed. No, no – my commandment tended no whit to that end” (105). Elizabeth’s second point is that she is the head of state and that Parliament is the body, alluding to her earlier maternal argument of care by reminding them that she is responsible for their safety. She maintains her position as the body politic while basing her power on the maternal relationship she has constructed with her male subjects.

Although she speaks with the authority of a prince, Elizabeth bolsters her influence by nurturing her relationship with parliament. Her language reminds Parliament of her care and protection: “But do you think that either I am unmindful of your surety by succession, wherein is all my care, considering I know myself to be mortal? Or that I went about to break your liberties? No, it was never my meaning, but to stay you before you fall in the ditch” (108). She tells Parliament that her first thought is for their safety, and that she is in a position to see the danger better than they. Elizabeth repeats the same argument several times with different figurative language, first invoking her power as

sovereign, then rephrasing it to remind them of the image she has created for herself – a caring maternal one.

Elizabeth reverses the order of imagery in this speech by framing her relationship to Parliament with sovereign authority. She inverts her imagery but not her strategy, referring to their relationship each time she asserts her authority. In this instance she ends with an admonition and an order: “beware however you prove your prince’s patience, as you have now done mine . . . My lord, you will do as I bade you” (108). The finality of Elizabeth’s directive for Parliament’s dissolution draws its authority from two premises: first, her status as prince (the body politic) and second as the maternal figure in her relationship with them – as mother (the body natural). She successfully integrates her femininity with her authority, justifying her position through divine right and maternal reciprocity with Parliament.

Elizabeth’s tactics inspired other women to follow her example, and this fact validates her success. Mihoko Suzuki describes Elizabeth’s effect on gendered politics following her reign, postulating that “the precedent of Elizabeth’s celebrated rule was strategically deployed as at least part of their self-justification by women who sought to challenge patriarchal norms and to participate in political discourse” (1082). Anne Clifford recorded her fight to retain her title and estate, mirroring Elizabeth’s strategy to justify her monarchy. Amelia Lanyer wrote “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” as a justification for woman’s equality, alluding to her time in the Elizabethan court and comparing her patrons to Elizabeth.

Most scholars agree that the benefits were primarily exclusive to Elizabeth during her lifetime, but created a precedent for women to emulate at least in literary ideology during the following century. Elizabeth succeeded in redefining her own femininity through figurative language; she validated her sovereignty but did little to redefine feminine authority for other Elizabethan women. Whether or not Elizabeth's strategy affected other women during her time, the writings of seventeenth-century women reveal that she set a precedent for female authorship. Elizabeth successfully defined her position with her explanation of why and how she came to be queen. God ordained her as ruler for the purpose of protecting the realm against the internal and external threats against His prescribed order of the social hierarchy. She maintained her authority by redefining her femininity through maternal imagery.

Elizabeth Tudor turned the qualities of her gender into an asset. She used the imagery of virginity and motherhood to establish her legitimacy, redefining the hierarchical order as God, herself, and Parliament. The paradox of Elizabeth's strategy was the disembodiment of her feminine self from her body politic, justifying the male role of monarch through female positioning. She redefined the monarch's power as an exchange rather than as a mandate, ultimately invoking absolute privilege while protecting it through her reciprocal relationship with Parliament. Reciprocity allowed Elizabeth to support her claim to power by glorifying her personal experience and accomplishments. By defining her relationship to God and Parliament in feminine-gendered imagery, Elizabeth substantiated her authority to decide the issue of marriage and succession.

IV. EXECUTING MARY: PUBLIC HESITANCE AND PRIVATE INTENT

Elizabeth's public hesitation to execute Mary, Queen of Scots differs from her covert management of the affair, revealing her mastery of self-invention. Mary's presence in England creates a dilemma for Elizabeth; executing the Scottish queen would incite retaliation from external opposition while inaction would invite internal rebellion. Elizabeth's solution integrates public hesitance with a private condemnation of Mary, effectively separating her personal comments from her public persona. She openly voices reluctance to punish Mary while "privately" promoting her suspicion and intent, revealing her mastery of figurative language and its mediums. Elizabeth publicly positions herself as a victim of external forces, vocalizing her fear of God's wrath, her reluctance to execute another monarch, and her personal love for Mary. Privately, she warns Mary of her true feelings, penning them in her poem "The Doubt of Future Foes." The poem reveals that she knows what Mary is planning and how Elizabeth will punish anyone who attempts to remove her from the throne.

The poem's composition is dated circa 1571, some three years after Mary's arrest and sixteen years before her execution, predicting the eventual outcome with uncanny accuracy. Although Elizabeth publicly protests vehemently against its publication, the covert language of poetry is far more effectively than public oratory in achieving her purpose of speaking against the Scottish queen's threat to her monarchy. Almost a century later George Puttenham illuminates Elizabeth's tactics in The Arte of

English Poesie, noting her discussion of a perilous situation under the guise of private feminine writing:

And this was the occasion: our soueraigne Lady perceiuing how by the Sc.
Q. residence within this Realme at so great libertie and ease (as were
skarce meete for so great and daungerous a prysoner) bred secret
factions among her people, and made many of the nobilitie incline to
fauour her partie: some of them desirous of innouation in the state: others
aspiring to greater fortunes by her libertie and life. The Queene our
soueraigne Lady to declare that she was nothing ignorant of those secret
practizes, though she had long with great wisdom and patience
dissembled it, writeth this ditty most sweet and sententious, not hiding
from all such aspiring minds the daunger of their ambition and disloyaltie:
which afterward fell out most truly by th'exemplary chastisement of sundry
persons, who in fauour of the sayd Sc. Q. declining from her Maiestie,
sought to interrupt the quiet of the Realme by many euill and vndutifull
Practizes. (207)

Puttenham asserts that Elizabeth writes a “ditty most sweet and sensuous” to dissemble the secret practices of “others aspiring to greater fortunes by her libertie and life,” illustrating the political moment when the covert language of poetry would prove more effective than public oratory in asserting authority.

Elizabeth protests the publication of her “private thoughts” concerning Mary, but she also benefits greatly from the protection that the feminine venue of poetry provides.

She is able to counter Mary's hidden threat with a covert warning of her own, while enjoying immunity from the consequences that a public condemnation would instigate.

Jennifer Summit elaborates on Puttenham's interpretation of Elizabeth's poem:

The "daughter of debate," as Puttenham explains, is the Queen of Scots, who was Elizabeth's cousin and Catholic rival for the throne; and as the poem foretells, she was indeed beheaded for treason on February 8, 1587, after her long captivity in England. This reference is supported by the poem's textual history: surviving manuscripts of "The Doubt of Future Foes" place its composition at around 1570, within two years after Mary fled Scotland to seek the refuge that she apparently expected to find in England's borders. (175-176)

Puttenham and Summit discuss Elizabeth's covert management of a hidden threat as opposed to an open response, illuminating the advantage that the ambiguous meanings of poetry provide compared to a direct public confrontation. Summit defines this advantage more succinctly:

In Puttenham's discussion, "The Doubt of Future Foes" counters a hidden threat by issuing an equally hidden threat of its own through the use of figurative language that enables the queen to present both the subject and herself very differently than she could in an open speech. Her aim in the poem, Puttenham argues, is less to make an outright declaration of knowledge than to display her own skill at piercing the dissemblance of others by proving that she is an arch-dissembler herself. (178)

Elizabeth's covert management of Mary through hidden language enables her to assume an appropriate affect in her public oratory, where she can claim dismay at her poem's publication. Elizabeth's tactics involve private commentary, deliberate circulation of her personal discourse, and a public display of modesty at its publication. This strategy reinforces Elizabeth's legitimacy by allowing her to speak through the protected medium of feminine discourse while maintaining a posture of silence in public. Her public embarrassment at exposure enables Elizabeth to redefine Parliament's role as confidant rather than enemy, providing her an opportunity to establish authority through personal experience and reciprocity.

Elizabeth's poem "The Doubt of Future Foes" occupies an important position in relation to her speeches, providing insight into her meticulous image management. The poem serves as a mirror between her intent and posturing, illuminating her tactics in arguing against Mary's execution while divulging her true intent to eliminate her rival.

Public Posture and Private Intent

Publicly, Elizabeth redirects the entire affair to the private feminine level of communication, effectively protecting it from the stigma attached to public oratory:

Notwithstanding, I assure you, if the case stood between her and myself only, if it had pleased God to make us both milkmaids with pails on our arms, so that the matter should have rested between us two; and I knew that she did and would seek my destruction still, yet could I not consent to her death. (188)

Elizabeth uses imagery that constructs the conflict in the private space of feminine discourse, transforming herself and Mary into “milkmaids with pails on our arms.” Her assurance that she would not consent to Mary’s death, even knowing the Scottish queen’s intent, infers a family intimacy contrary to her verse. Privately Elizabeth writes:

My rusty sword through rest
Shall first his edge employ
To pull their tops that seek such change
Or gape for future joy. (134)

These lines reveal Elizabeth’s intention to execute anyone who seeks her throne. She refers to her “rusty sword,” indicating that there has not been an execution for some time, but that its next use will be to decapitate anyone who threatens to remove her from authority.

Elizabeth’s poem clearly implicates Mary as a threat, labeling her “the daughter of debate that discord aye doth sow,” and blaming her for the division in Scotland that has deposed her own reign. She is also unambiguous about her feelings toward Mary seeking refuge in England, stating, “No foreign banished wight shall anchor in this port,” destroying any hope of welcome. Elizabeth’s publicly displays familial concern for Mary while her private verse is more ominous in tone.

Based on the evidence provided by the poem’s message and her subsequent comments to parliament concerning the matter, it is reasonable to assume that Elizabeth is fully aware of Mary’s intent. The Queen of Scots’ talent for self-destructive

behavior includes a damning letter detailing her plan for escape and Elizabeth's assassination:

The affairs being thus prepared and forces in readiness both without and within the realm . . . The said design [the death of Elizabeth] shall be executed . . . to the end that immediately after they may be at the place of my abode, before that my keeper can have advice of the execution of the said design, or at least before he can fortify himself within the house or carry me out of the same.

(Letter from Queen Mary to Anthony Babington, July 17, 1586)

Mary's correspondence to Babington ultimately provides ample evidence of her treason, placing Elizabeth in an impossible situation. To publicly retaliate or even disclose the evidence would provoke an immediate retaliation from external opposition, while a lack of response would encourage Mary's supporters to carry out their plot. Elizabeth's delay in responding to Mary's threat would decidedly increase the Scottish queen's chances for success.

Elizabeth's problem is to eradicate Mary's threat without creating a precedent or inciting retaliation from Catholic factions. Executing another monarch would endanger Elizabeth's position by example; if she violated the principle of divine right, then the precedent could be applied to her. Katherine Eggert clearly states Elizabeth's problem:

Mary's trial and execution disjoined the authority of the law, as well as the authority of Elizabeth's own advisors, from the authority of a divinely ordained monarch – a station from which Mary was neither demoted in

either Scotland or England, even while the English authorities were branding her an adulteress, murderess, and traitor. Killing the queen, even if not their own queen, thus put England in something of a quandary. The queen's rule, as it turned out, might indeed be not only altered, but ended by force of law: that is, by a form of rule finally superior to that of the monarchy. (16)

If Elizabeth should acquiesce to Parliament's petition to kill Mary, she would also compromise her primary rationale for ruling and negate her argument for absolute power. Mary's execution would contradict the prevailing belief in an absolute monarchy and create a precedent for authority greater than a monarch's word.

Elizabeth's dilemma includes internal rebellion if she keeps Mary alive. The Catholic queen's presence in England threatens domestic security through clandestine communications and plots. Mary attempts to organize England's Catholic faction into a rebellion through her use of covert letters, symbols and poetry. Public advocacy for Mary's death would invite retaliation from opposition outside of England, while silence or inaction would risk domestic revolt. Mary's threat to domestic security requires a hidden response not only because of the precedent a public condemnation would create, but also due to the stigma attached to public female oratory.

Elizabeth's solution integrates her covert response to Mary with a public resistance to speak. She expresses a feminine repugnance of open expression to Parliament, protecting her response to Mary by relegating it to the realm of private discourse. Elizabeth declares her aversion for publicly discussing the subject: "I have

this day been in greater Conflict with myself than ever I was in all my life, whether I should speak, or hold my peace. If I should speak and not complain, I shall dissemble; if I should be silent, all you labor and Pains taken were in vain” (Camden, 263-264). She invokes humanist restrictions on female privacy while recognizing the necessity of a response. Elizabeth’s awareness of her precarious position as a woman is foreshadowed in an earlier speech at Oxford where she says, “For a long time, truly, a great doubt has held me: Should I be silent or should I speak? If indeed I should speak, I would make evident to you how uncultivated I am in letters; however, if I remain silent my incapacity may appear to be contempt” (90). She acknowledges the dichotomy between her femininity and her sovereignty, ironically forecasting her predicament in handling the situation with Mary. Her professed insecurity about her proficiency in letters characteristically displays her mastery of them, as evidenced by her Latin oration. Elizabeth acknowledges her paradoxical roles as woman and monarch, signifying a strategy combining public and hidden management in her affairs. This dichotomy later enables her to separate personal commentary from outward affection, providing her with a medium to state privately what she cannot say in public.

Elizabeth presents the conflict as a private matter between herself and Mary, framing her revelation with a feminine aversion to public disclosure and its corresponding impropriety: “As it is not unknown to some of my lords here (for now I will play the blab), I secretly wrote her a letter upon the discovery of sundry treasons, that if she would confess them and privately acknowledge them by her letters to myself, she never should need be called for them into so public questions” (192). Elizabeth calls

herself a “blab,” a word that characterizes her public admission as sexually inappropriate and indicative of her embarrassment. Elizabeth labels her disclosure indiscreet, understanding that Renaissance discourses of secrecy associate a woman's revelation of secret matters with sexual impropriety. She insinuates that her private correspondence would be considered gossip in a public forum, acknowledging the generally accepted correlation between indiscreet talk and sexual promiscuity. Elizabeth indicates that the disclosure of her private correspondence to Mary is tantamount to gossip, generating interest in all of her private texts as privileged information. The misogynistic ideology of the sixteenth-century relegates female authorship to the private sector; Elizabeth capitalizes on this social more by distinguishing her letters and poetry from her speeches. She separates her femininity from her sovereignty by designating her texts concerning Mary as personal, effectively removing them from the public arena. These private texts increase in value as personal reflections and become objects of desire by Elizabeth's intent that they remain secret.

Elizabeth removes her revelation to an appropriate feminine medium and privileges her audience with an inside view of her personal knowledge, effectively maintaining a proper humility throughout her disclosure. Jennifer Summit examines the correlation between female authorship and public repudiation of publication: “The common protestation that female-authored texts are meant to be concealed might be seen as a way of adhering to humanist injunctions to female privacy while simultaneously constructing the texts as restricted and hence the objects of elevated value and desire” (189). The private forum of poetry allows Elizabeth to maintain a

public posture of feminine marginality while providing her an avenue to confront her opponent with impunity. Her reluctance to discuss her private texts openly increases their value because secretiveness generates interest by its nature.

Elizabeth fulfills the customary expectations of a woman's discretion in public, leading general opinion to interpret her tentative posturing as female kindheartedness. Elizabeth battles Mary through private verse and correspondence, while maintaining the public appearance of feminine silence, privacy, and marginality. She manipulates social expectations of femininity by working within the existing parameters, speaking within the privatized spaces allocated to women and maintaining decorum in the public arena reserved for men. In public, Elizabeth resolves her dilemma between a sovereign responsibility to speak and a woman's required silence by effectively assuming both positions. Summit elaborates:

Indeed, given the extreme delicacy of the situation, to make an open declaration of what the poem states covertly – that she suspects Mary of treasonous activity and that she intends to “polle her toppe” – would be imprudent in the extreme. To issue such sentiments in a poem, however, afford her a crucial level of deniability, by allowing her to frame it as a “private” text recording her secret thoughts and not an official proclamation of political intent. (197)

Elizabeth confronts Mary through her poetry, effectively separating her intent from the public arena. She privately affirms her intent to eliminate the Scottish queen while maintaining plausible deniability in public, satisfying both her obligation to response and

to silence. She responds through the private forum of female authorship while maintaining public resistance to execute Mary.

Elizabeth distances her personal comments from her public persona by expressing her horror at their publication, while distinguishing their value by her protestation. Summit analyzes Elizabeth's use of feminine texts in dealing with Mary:

Once again the queen's relationship with Mary Queen of Scots is staged as a drama of female writing, distinguished by the "secrecy" and "privacy" of its texts, which are sharply distinguished from the "public question" of Mary's trial and execution. The boundary between these realms is marked by the shame of exposure, and again Elizabeth brackets this scene of private writing by calling attention to its involuntary and "unseemly" publication. (192)

Elizabeth communicates her agenda privately while affecting a public posture of mortification at its publication, refashioning her political liability as a woman into an asset. Parliament assumes the role of Elizabeth's confidant by its access to privileged information concerning Mary. She reluctantly concedes to their intrusive queries into her personal texts, claiming dismay at their increasing circulation. Elizabeth's method of disclosing her information and her public modesty at its exposure reinforces the intimacy she has fashioned between Parliament and herself. Her declared intent to "play the blab" indicates awareness of her performance; she claims fear of exposure while orchestrating the entire release of information.

The Framing of Authority

Mary's arrival in England creates a crisis for Elizabeth, who is forced to deal with Parliament's fear of the Catholic threat to the throne. Parliament tests her authority through several petitions requesting Mary's execution and legislation condemning her for plots in her name, with or without her participation. Elizabeth faces the probability of a power struggle concerning Mary, and is challenged to find a way to navigate the difficult situation without instigating a confrontation. She mollifies Parliament by continuing to frame her authority with divine imagery, reciprocity with Parliament, and a maternal obligation to protect the realm. This strategy enables Elizabeth to postpone a direct public answer concerning Mary's execution, providing her time to deal with the crisis covertly.

In her first reply to Parliament, Elizabeth affirms her special status in relation to God: "When I remember the bottomless depth of God's great benefits towards me, I find them to be so many or rather so infinite in themselves as that they exceed the capacity of all men" (186). She positions herself as the recipient of God's special favor while reaffirming her unique relationship with Him. She refers to her benefits as "infinite" and states they "exceed the capacity of all men," elevating her stature well above the existing male hierarchy. Elizabeth's imagery separates her authority from Parliament's, redefining the crisis with Mary as one between sovereigns. She elevates Mary's status by association, allowing her to position their conflict above the jurisdiction of legislative bodies. Elizabeth can then operate on a covert level, relegating her retaliation to Mary's threat to the personal arena of feminine discourse. Their female authorship is glorified

as a battle between two titans, exempt from the interference of ordinary men. Elizabeth confirms her divinity by prefacing her remarks with an acute reminder that she is God's chosen ruler of England. She infers that her delegation of His authority exceeds Parliament's influence in matters of the realm.

Elizabeth maintains her control over Parliament, persistently stressing her authority in reciprocal terms and by prefacing her speeches with an acknowledgement to God. She defines her power through her relationship to God and Parliament, designating herself as intermediary, leaving no doubt of her position in the hierarchy. Her declaration of gratitude to God clearly indicates that her resources are as infinite as the benefits He has bestowed on her. Kathi Vosevich explains:

In other words, Elizabeth was making it plain that she was not a woman to be manipulated like her sister Mary, but a powerful prince. Elizabeth would ultimately be married only to England, a fact she often stressed, and would remain in control of herself and England. (74)

Unlike Mary Tudor, Elizabeth uses her gender to fashion her authority, manipulating common misogynistic views toward women to her advantage. Vosevich observes Elizabeth's assertion of authority; her marriage to England leaves no place for a husband and her sovereign power is not subject to Parliament's will. Elizabeth is free to engage Mary independently, validated by divine providence and confirmed through her marriage to England. She protects her femininity by assigning her subservience to God, deferring Mary's execution by stating she fears His disapproval. Elizabeth continually establishes this connection to God before countermanding Parliament.

Elizabeth follows her assertion of authority by acknowledging her subject's love for her, assuring them that her delegation of authority has been well received. She reinforces her authority by returning to reciprocity. She says, "Yet I do not thank God for that nor for all the rest so much as for this: that after twenty-eight years' reign I do not perceive any diminution of my subjects' good love and affection for me" (186). She signifies her gratitude as the conduit between God, herself, and Parliament, designating a hierarchical flow that identifies her as intermediary. Divine right justifies Elizabeth's order while love and affection affirms it. Anne Somerset summarizes the queen's resolve: "Once again, she was reminding the men about her that they were dealing with no mere woman, but an extraordinary being, endowed with gifts that bordered on the sublime" (159). Elizabeth defines her status as a mandate from God while venerating her relationship to her subjects as His greatest gift, accentuating their reciprocity as the most important aspect of her reign. By reminding Parliament that she is no mere woman, Elizabeth reinforces her conflict with Mary as something above the reach of mortal men. She emphasizes that she is the instrument of God's authority rather than the source of England's, inferring that Mary must be dealt with on a higher plane. Her unchanging message to Parliament is that they are the beneficiaries of God's grace through her love and protection, nurturing the belief that she can defend them from Mary's threat. Elizabeth defines her relationship as a union of mortal men and an extraordinary sovereign, who will protect them from harm if they trust her.

Elizabeth binds her authority directly to God's, enabling her to counter uncertainty concerning her status as a female. She is not facing Mary Stuart alone, but

with God's personal protection and authority. She conforms to existing social expectations of feminine subservience by claiming that God has designated Himself as her personal guardian. Mary Tudor married the king of Spain, inciting Parliament to pass legislation prohibiting his control over English affairs. Elizabeth attaches herself to the ultimate male figure, ensuring that Parliament cannot circumvent her influence. She appropriates male authority through a female gendered position, effectively utilizing it to her purpose. Elizabeth's connection to God allows her direct access to His divinity, ensuring that no human can exert control over her. God's divinity becomes Elizabeth's, allowing her to manipulate existing religious ideology to support her absolute authority in deciding Mary's fate. She abates Parliament's fear by glorifying and asserting her authority as divinely ordained, empowering her femininity through her submission to God's will for England. Mary Beth Rose elaborates:

One of Elizabeth's major rhetorical strategies is to claim her femaleness in order to discard it, thus disarming her subjects and neutralizing their insecurities about female rule by attaching herself to the greater prestige of male heroism and kingship. (Gender and Heroism, 37)

Unlike Mary, Elizabeth appropriates her sex to access authority rather than defer it. She occupies a traditional male role of sovereignty by claiming God's power as her own, diminishing Parliament's influence in the process. Elizabeth transforms herself into a heroic figure to face Mary's threat, drawing on God's majesty and wonder to support her image as an extraordinary female.

Elizabeth completes the framework of her authority by acknowledging the relationship between her and Parliament, complimenting their concern and promising to return their trust. She addresses their petition as a declaration of concern for her safety, redefining Mary's danger to England as a personal threat to herself. Elizabeth transforms Parliament's petition into a dialogue by receiving it as a declaration of their love for her. This strategy transforms Parliament into her ally rather than the opposition, enabling Elizabeth to utilize her femininity to manage the crisis. By recreating the conflict with Parliament into a personal dialogue, Elizabeth is able to personalize her response and avoid the questionable action of asserting absolute power. Parliament's petition has attempted to invalidate that possibility, forcing her to choose a more diplomatic solution. She carefully cultivates her relationship to Parliament through the language of reciprocity:

And therefore, as touching your counsels and consultations, I conceive them to be wise, honest, and conscionable: so provident and careful for the safety of my life (which I wish no longer than may be for your good) that though I never can yield you of recompense your due, yet shall I endeavor myself to give you just cause to think your goodwill not ill bestowed, and strive to make myself worthy for such subjects. (204)

She compliments Parliament on their virtuous efforts in her behalf, deflecting the fear for their own safety by inferring it is voiced for her. Elizabeth has reinvented her conflict with Mary into a battle between titans, and her response to Parliament's petition becomes a maternal reassurance to frightened children. By fashioning herself as the

recipient of Parliament's concern, Elizabeth redefines their intent in petitioning her and softens the tension between them. She labels their petition "wise, honest, and conscionable," referring to their anxiety as "provident and careful" since it is directed toward her safety. She states that she could never repay them for their concern, but will strive to be worthy "for such subjects." Elizabeth's lavish praise reinforces her position that Mary is her personal problem, and that she appreciates Parliament's concern. Her promise to live up to their standard and her self-deprecating wit toward her own inadequacies redefine their conflict as a reciprocal relationship. She effectively deflects Parliament's insistence for an answer into a dialogue, recreating them as a confidant rather than an opponent. Elizabeth defines her role through figurative language and redefines Parliament's role accordingly.

Within the framework of self-fashioning, Elizabeth addresses Parliament's individual concerns, eliminating any avenue that may provide them the means to redirect her argument. She is fiercely possessive of Mary's fate, accentuating her rationale between imagery of God's benevolence and her relationship with Parliament. She interweaves her desire to please God with denial of any ill will towards Mary: "I bear her no malice nor seek other revenge but this: that I wish with all my heart that she may be repentant for this and all her other crimes" (187). Elizabeth publicly portrays a feminine affect of resolution and reconciliation, stating that she has no desire to be the instrument of Mary's demise. Her public posture is consistent with her affirmation that women's discourse belongs in the private realm, enabling her to communicate her personal feelings in verse: "The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy, and wit me

warns to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy" (134). Elizabeth says that she is not happy with the threat that Mary presents, and that her common sense dictates that she should be wary of deceit. Her private assertion that she knows Mary has a hidden agenda is quite different than her public display of cousinly affection. Elizabeth's knowledge of Mary's duplicity is less important than displaying her mastery at dissembling it, serving notice that she is a force to be reckoned with.

Publicly, Elizabeth frets over the morality of killing a relative, weaving her dismay with references to the opinions of God, her subjects, and herself. She is uncharacteristically ambivalent when discussing the subject with parliament. While unswerving and aggressive in her verse, Elizabeth is hesitant in her outward speech. She debates the consequences of an execution openly and deliberately. She expresses her own pain over the decision, and ponders what others will think of her:

Whereof to think it grieveth me not a little, considering that there will be
some that will not stick to shed their own blood for the sake and defense
of their kin, and that by me it should be said hereafter, a maiden queen
hath been the death of a prince, her kinswoman. A thing in no sort
deserved by me, howsoever by the despite of malice it may be reported of
me. (196-197)

Elizabeth's hesitant response and open disclosure of feelings epitomize her public history of feminine posturing. She states that others in her position would not hesitate to kill a relative and certainly would not die for them. She calls herself "a maiden queen," evoking an aura of innocence that compliments her womanhood. She laments

that she does not deserve the stigma that will surely be attached to her for executing another queen, much less a relative. The effect of her posturing is a successful deferral of accountability, enabling Elizabeth to operate covertly against Mary.

Elizabeth's public display of affection and hesitancy concerning Mary perpetuates her image as a virgin queen, ruling England by divine ordination. She sustains her sovereignty by adhering to the feminine qualities of subservience to God and maternal love towards her people. Her public speech adheres to the misogynistic ideology of female silence and political marginality while her private writings express her anger aggressively, combining open and hidden communication as a means of managing the crisis involving Mary. Her strategy results in the successful maintenance of her image and authority as a female monarch, satisfying and violating the rules of gendered conduct. She comments privately, promotes the circulation of her manuscript, then claims embarrassment at the exposure. She independently utilizes the social conventions of femininity and sovereignty, justifying her actions under each to achieve her purpose. Jennifer Summit examines Elizabeth's approach:

Such a posture became increasingly useful to Elizabeth as she was called on to account for her policy on the Queen of Scots for the public record. Long after her ministers called for Mary's execution, Elizabeth equivocated for fear of reprisal, and even in the two speeches in which she was pressed to pronounce Mary's sentence, she refused to do so openly. In a speech delivered to Parliament in 1586 Elizabeth protests that she cannot speak

openly about Mary, using what by then were signature terms for discussing her supposed aversion for public speaking. (191)

Summit refers to Elizabeth's successful navigation of an untenable situation. Elizabeth risks external reprisal by speaking against Mary openly and invites internal rebellion through inaction. Her solution is to persistently maintain her silence in public while relegating her response to a private medium, integrating two seemingly incongruent tactics into a homogenous stratagem.

Elizabeth does not convey the ambivalence and admiration toward Mary in her poetry that she portrays in her speeches to Parliament. She counters her public display with a private assurance that she knows Mary's intent and how to deal with her:

And fruitless all their grafted guile,
As shortly ye shall see.
The dazzled eyes with pride,
Which great ambition blinds,
Shall be sealed by worthy wights
Whose foresight falsehood finds. (134)

Elizabeth warns Mary that her scheming is pointless and that her ambition blinds her to the reality of her situation. Vigilant and loyal "wights" (fellows) will see through Mary's lies and unravel her deceptions, "unsealing" her "dazzled eyes" in the process.

Elizabeth says that Mary will see that she is not deceived and soon realize the futility of her hidden conspiracies. Elizabeth's verse does not reveal Mary's secrets; it indicates

only that she knows them. She professes knowledge without divulging its substance, soliciting Mary to confess.

Elizabeth derides Mary through the privileged medium of female writing, then discloses her writing under the mantle of female privacy. She tells Parliament: “Neither did I it of mind to circumvent her, for then I knew as much as she could confess, and so I did write” (192). Elizabeth discloses her correspondence in a public arena, satisfying both her need for silence and response by applying each to the appropriate forum. She communicates with Mary privately, and then protects her discourse by publicly announcing it was initiated in a proper female medium. She conforms to misogynistic ideology by fulfilling her sovereign obligation to act in private, while maintaining her silence in public.

Elizabeth’s response to Parliament’s petition to execute Mary is meticulously prepared and edited, indicating that her strategy is carefully orchestrated. Nona Fienberg comments that Elizabeth “seems to brood to herself, and to allow Parliament access to a personal meditation. She grants that liberty, however, in a most calculated, controlled manner, just as the sonneteer permits the public to enter a private world, but shaped carefully into public, conventional form” (22-23). Feinberg recognizes the duplicity in Elizabeth’s method; the queen performs for Parliament, lamenting the exposure of her private correspondence while simultaneously disclosing it. Elizabeth’s controlled release of this information ensures that her gendered position is protected and her authority remains intact. She enlists Parliament’s sympathy by creating an intimacy in her delivery, fashioning them as confidants to privileged information. Allison

Heisch notes that by “playing the blab,” Elizabeth alleges “not to know that her confidential interjection would find its way to a broad international audience” (50).

Elizabeth maintains a proper affect of feminine modesty by denying knowledge that her private writing would be drawn into the public forum. She ensures its disclosure by her public denial.

Elizabeth is careful to protect her status by assuming the feminine posture of subservience and modesty, but she does not hesitate to chastise Parliament for passing The Act for the Preservation of the Queen’s Safety.³ This legislation was passed to stop conspiracies against Elizabeth, and was enacted in response to recent plots against her. It also granted Parliament the power to act against Mary without Elizabeth’s consent. She expresses her anger in a manner that reminds them of the reciprocity that binds them together. Elizabeth admonishes Parliament in a maternal tone, reinforcing the relationship of love and caring that she has fashioned between them.

But to return to the matter . . . God forbid that the ancient law should be defective to punish a person which should offend in so high a degree. But you, my masters of the law, are so fine – you regard so much the words, syllables, and letters thereof more than the true sense and meaning indeed – that oftentimes you make the same to seem absurd . . . She must have held up her hand and been arraigned at a bar, which had been a proper

³ State Trials (A Complete Collection of State-Trials and Proceedings for High Treason), 4th ed. (London: T. Wright, 1776) v.1 144-5.

manner of proceeding with a woman of her quality! (I mean her quality by birth and not by conditions.) (188)

Elizabeth breaks abruptly from a profession of gratitude to God and assumes a sarcastic tone, creating a lighter mood when admonishing Parliament. Her delivery presupposes affection toward them, as a mother would talk to her children. She calls them “my masters of the law,” imparting an amused response to their offense and softening her reaction. She ridicules them for passing an unnecessary law, stating that the preexisting laws are sufficient for the situation. She teases Parliament for their triviality in revising a perfectly efficient legal precedent, reducing their indictment of Mary to a substandard action. She deems their legislation inappropriate to a woman of Mary’s birthright, reminding them that her cousin is a queen and deserving of a higher standard. It is no coincidence that Elizabeth requests the same respect that she has demanded for herself, as Parliament’s treatment of Mary would set a precedent by which she could be judged.

Parliament’s act was intended to circumvent Elizabeth’s hesitation by explicitly holding Mary responsible for plots instituted in her name, with or without her knowledge. Elizabeth argued that this legislation was unnecessary, as the existing laws had already established a precedent for dealing with conspiracies against the crown. Parliament passed this law to coerce Elizabeth into an action she considered perilous, fearing retaliation from European Catholics. Her reply reveals the precariousness of her situation: “You have laid a hard and heavy burden upon me in this case, for now all is to be done by the direction of the queen” (189). Elizabeth emphasizes that Parliament’s

single-minded pressure to execute Mary has limited the possibility of a peaceful resolution and placed that responsibility on her. The duplicity of her statement is revealed in her acceptance of this burden, as she opportunely claims the final decision as hers because of Parliament's action.

Rather than respond by agreeing to Mary's execution, Elizabeth defers an answer because of the imminent danger that it would provoke at home and abroad. She prefaces her remarks by summarizing the consequences of anything she might do or say regarding Mary. She says:

To your petition I must pause and take respite before I give an answer. Princes, you know, stand upon stages so that their actions are viewed and beheld of all men; and I am sure my doings will come to the scanning of many fine wits; not only within the realm, but in foreign countries . . . But this you may be sure of: I will be most careful to consider what and do that which shall be best for the safety of my people and most for the good of the realm. (189)

Elizabeth manipulates the circumstances to her advantage, claiming that Parliament has put her in a position that demands consideration. Any decision that she makes concerning Mary will result in a public outcry, whether from Catholics or Protestants. She says that her deferral of a decision will provoke consternation from religious factions in England and abroad. She uses the Act for the Preservation of Queen's Safety as a rationale for assuming final authority, deferring an answer for the protection England and her people. She redirects the domestic and foreign reaction to her

decision toward herself, invoking Parliament's sympathy and her authority as the result of their legislation. She says, "I am sure my doings will come to the scanning of many fine wits," personalizing her decision and the subsequent reaction, while creating empathy for her discretion in deciding the matter.

Within the framework of divine right and reciprocity, Elizabeth repeatedly utilizes her experience and survival skills as a rationale for Parliament to acquiesce to her authority. Having defined Mary's presence as a personal conflict between two sovereigns, Elizabeth now attempts to convince Parliament of her unique qualifications to deal with Mary independently. Although she differentiates herself by divine right, Elizabeth identifies with her subjects through her personal experience. She integrates a humanistic tactic of legitimizing herself within the framework of divinity, utilizing her femininity as a confirmation that God's trust in her is well placed.

Elizabeth infers that if Parliament believes that she reigns by divine providence, then they must trust that God has provided her with the assets necessary to protect them from the Catholic threat. She cloaks her qualifications for deciding Mary's fate within her rationale for dispensing God's authority. Mary Beth Rose asserts: "Elizabeth I both opposes and draws on traditional male rhetorics of authority, distinctively valuing both" (Gender and Heroism, 43). Elizabeth creates legitimacy by expanding existing constructions of womanhood, combining the traditional male ideology of divine right with the female tradition of textualizing personal experience. Her strategy enables her to monopolize all gendered positions while implementing them as a woman. She even summarizes the benefits of her experience to Parliament: "After that I did put myself to

the school of experience, where I sought to learn what things were most fit for a king to have, and I found them to be four: namely, justice, temper, magnanimity, and judgment” (198). She characterizes her summary of acquired sovereign qualities as “most fit for a king,” defining herself (as she frequently does) with traditional male traits. Elizabeth creates an avenue for expression where none was previously available, recognizing “the anomalous powers of choice and definition uniquely available to her in a culture that (officially at least) silences women” (Rose, Gender and Heroism, 43). She inverts traditional convention to her own purpose, effectively escaping the restrictions placed on her as a woman. Elizabeth successfully aligns her sovereignty with God and her feminine experience with masculine qualities, validating her authority to decide the issue of Mary without Parliament’s interference.

Elizabeth does not surrender her feminine experience but actually emphasizes it as proof of her ability to deal with Mary while protecting England from the consequences. She uses her personal experience as a woman to expand the existing hierarchy and make a place for herself within it. She is God’s designated ruler and He has provided her with the personal characteristics to protect her subjects. Elizabeth’s strategy does not dispute existing social ideology, but rather challenges it to conform to her self-fashioning. She asserts her experience under the mantle of divine right, expanding traditional sovereign authority to include herself without straying from her feminine birthright:

Then I entered further into the school of experience, bethinking what it fitted a king to do; and there I saw he scant well furnished if he either

lacked justice, temperance, magnanimity, or judgment. As for the two latter, I will not boast; my sex doth not permit it. But for the two first, this dare I say: amongst my subjects I never knew a difference of person where right was one, nor never to my knowledge preferred for favor whom I thought not fit for worth; nor bent my ears to credit a tale that first was told me; nor was so rash to corrupt my judgment with my censure before I heard the cause. (204)

Elizabeth says she will not speak of magnanimity or judgment because they are not fitting for a woman to discuss in public. She gives examples of her justice and temperance, connecting herself to her subjects through her non-hierarchical view of them (she speaks notably from an authoritative position), and glorifies her history of rule in the process. She exemplifies her magnanimity and judgment anyway, appropriating them through sovereign experience. She disclaims her female authority only to reclaim it as monarch, legitimizing herself through decidedly feminine discourse. Elizabeth convinces Parliament to be patient while she utilizes her personal assets to resolve the problem of Mary, citing her past accomplishments as proof of her ability.

Elizabeth binds her personal achievement to divine providence, crediting God for her talents while comparing herself to historical rulers. Her declaration, “that as Solomon, so I above all things have desired wisdom at the hands of God” (198), extols her judgment through her personal accomplishments. She maintains her modesty by saying that wisdom is something she has prayed for. She does not claim wisdom or even say that God has bestowed it on her, but refers to it as a quality she

has desired from Him. She connects her wisdom to divinity, expanding her justification for sole authority to decide Mary's fate.

Elizabeth advocates prudence in publicly announcing a decision concerning Mary; it is the reason she delays an answer to Parliament's petition. She argues that a hasty decision, whether for or against Mary's execution, would invite retaliation from catholic factions. Elizabeth cites her experience with anger and the practice of self-control in order to convince Parliament that Mary's consequences should not be decided under duress. She effectively reinforces her argument for Parliament's restraint while validating her own ability to make a sensible decision. She relates her familiarity with self-restraint: "And as for temper, I have had always care to do as Augustus Caesar, who being moved to offense, before he attempted anything was willed to say over the alphabet" (198). By comparing her self-discipline to Caesar's she also indisputably compares herself to him, just as she has with Solomon. She cites temperance as a desirable quality for a ruler and subsequently justifies her delay in deciding a volatile case such as Mary's. Elizabeth's effect is to promote her humility while exemplifying her achievements, combining a justification of rule by divine right with the humanistic tactic of authorization through personal experience. She cloaks the latter strategy within the former, always reminding Parliament that God reigns supreme and she is the instrument of His authority. She lists the qualities that confirm her worthiness to act prudently with Mary.

Elizabeth authorizes her personal experience within the framework of her reciprocity with Parliament, which she in turn frames within her relationship to God. She

ensures that her self-justification is safely layered within her validation of authority. Establishing her power is crucial to preventing Parliament's interference with Elizabeth's strategy concerning Mary. She reminds Parliament of their relationship by saying, "there was never prince more bound to his people than I am to you all" (198). Elizabeth never asserts her authority without returning to reciprocity with her audience, reassuring them that their relationship is the most important aspect of her rule. She repeatedly redefines their role as her advocate, refashioning their demand for Mary's execution into a vote of confidence for her ability to protect England.

She frames her rapport with Parliament with her connection to God, reminding Parliament where her power emanates from: "I might adventure much more, were it with danger of mine own life, which I protest before God I chiefly regard in regard of yours" (199). Elizabeth tells Parliament her first duty is to protect them, and her "protest before God" affirms that this is a sacred obligation. She indicates her accountability to God, inferring that He has conferred the responsibility of Mary's fate upon her.

The petition to execute Mary, Queen of Scots presents Elizabeth with the most dangerous dilemma of her reign. Parliament's petition to execute Mary places her in a position where response or silence would incite unfavorable consequences. Her solution to this dilemma is to maintain silence publicly while responding to Mary's threat through the privileged private spaces of feminine discourse. Elizabeth assumes a feminine gendered position throughout the affair, presenting it as a private matter between two women, and publicly declaring her embarrassment at its exposure.

Elizabeth justifies her actions through her experience, enveloping them with her relationship to Parliament, which she in turn frames with her connection to God. She protects her authority by combining the ideology of humanism, reciprocity and divine right, enabling her to maintain a favorable image while achieving the unfavorable objective of eliminating Mary.

V. CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Tudor successfully overcame the sentiments of a misogynistic society to reconcile her femininity and authority as England's monarch. She justified her authority from a feminine gendered position, manipulating traditional social ideology by redefining her femininity as beneficial to the safety of the realm. Her skillful use of rhetoric and figurative language established and solidified her sovereignty. Elizabeth reinvented herself through imagery that portrayed her as subservient to God and maternal toward Parliament. She asserted that her succession to England's throne was the result of God's will and not her own ambition. Elizabeth used figurative language to define her authority in feminine gendered terms, reinventing herself through imagery of female subservience, virginity, and her maternal relationship with parliament. She portrayed her femininity in a desirable light, diminishing her threat to the established male hierarchy.

Femininity was not regarded as congruent with sovereignty, so Elizabeth separated her female self from her body politic, transcending her womanhood to become an incarnation of the state. She reinforced her authority by enveloping her personal accomplishments within her language of reciprocity, which she in turn framed with imagery associating her with the divine. She labeled herself a virgin queen, creating an inevitable association of the Virgin Mary and elevating her femininity beyond compliance to normal social expectations. Elizabeth validated her claim as God's

chosen ruler by emphasizing her personal accomplishments, redefining Parliament as the recipient of God's grace through her guidance.

Existing misogynist views on feminine behavior required Elizabeth's acknowledgement and she manipulated them to her own purpose. She positioned herself second to God by emphasizing her subservience to Him, effectively redefining the existing social hierarchy. Elizabeth claimed her divine right as sovereign by asserting that she was led to the throne, assuming a feminine posture of submissiveness to a greater power.

Elizabeth combined religious and secular arguments to justify her authority, learning from criticism of Mary Tudor's failure to address biblical precedent for her right to govern as a woman. She rebutted Protestant treatises against feminine rule by continually reinforcing her direct relationship to God, portraying herself as His handmaid and stressing her willingness to assume any position divine providence assigns her.

Unlike her half-sister Mary, Elizabeth practiced the strategies of survival she learned under Mary's Catholic rule. Elizabeth actively protected her claim of divine right by nurturing a maternal relationship with Parliament. She redefined her monarchy as an exchange rather than an absolute rule, providing protection in return for loyalty. By establishing herself as the recipient of Parliament's care, Elizabeth redefined their role as loyal subjects. Her self-definition imposed a subservient identity on Parliament.

The tradition of a male monarchy required Elizabeth to designate herself as a female proxy, describing her femininity as inferior while reminding her audience that her body politic was the same as any king's. She separated her womanhood from her

sovereign position, appropriating the title of prince to distinguish the two. Her subservience to God justified her reign, while she invoked her body politic to reinforce her sovereign authority. Elizabeth claimed this authority from a feminine position.

England's security was Elizabeth's primary motive for postponing marriage; she argued that her obligation as head of state outweighed her responsibility to bear children. She mollified her critics by claiming to be receptive to the future possibility of marriage, but maintained that her maternal relationship with Parliament demanded that she protect the realm first. Elizabeth continued to emphasize her subservience to God as her primary reason for hesitating to marry; she asserted that she was God's chosen protector of England, and that the dangerous religious division required prudence in matters of succession.

The title of virgin queen empowered Elizabeth as a divinely ordained deliverer of England. Her self-definition as a virgin reflected her personal preference not to share her power with anyone. Her female form became the basis of her power, manifested through her transformation from God's servant into England's virgin queen. Elizabeth abdicated her obligation to marry and perpetuate her line for a politic duty to the state, where her virginity ensured no interference with her sovereign obligations. She effectively transcended her status of God's chosen ruler, appropriating imagery of the divine to cloak her femininity. Elizabeth mystically transformed herself into Gloriana, God's virgin protector of England.

A carefully defined relationship with Parliament reinforced Elizabeth's authority; she used maternal imagery to create reciprocity through love and care. She reinforced

a hierarchy where God was first, she was second, and Parliament was third. She framed her princely authority in a maternal relationship with them, adopting a positive, socially accepted feminine role.

Parliament's petition to execute Mary, Queen of Scots demanded a tactful response; Elizabeth combined public posturing with covert action to avoid retaliation from her detractors. Her dilemma was the probable reaction of Catholic factions to any decision she would make; silence and speech would provoke equal repercussions. Societal ideology required feminine silence in public, while Elizabeth's sovereignty demanded that she respond to the crisis with Mary. Her solution integrated public hesitance with a private condemnation, separating her personal comments from her public persona.

Elizabeth redefined Mary's threat to her monarchy as a private conflict between two women. She removed her discourse with Mary to the private medium of feminine authorship, responding in her poem, "The Doubt of Future Fears." While Elizabeth was ambivalent in public, her personal response to Mary was candid. She privately affirmed her intent to eliminate the Scottish queen while maintaining plausible deniability in public, satisfying both her obligation to response and to silence.

The affect of horror that Elizabeth assumed at the disclosure of her poetry reinforced her public exhibit of feminine modesty. She feigned reluctance to discuss the matter with Parliament, labeling herself a gossip and subsequently increasing the value of the personal information she shared. Elizabeth redefined criticism of her hesitance

into a gesture of concern, and recreated Parliament as an ally by making them her confidant.

Femininity became an asset when Elizabeth managed Parliament's petition through imagery depicting it in a favorable light. She claimed authority through subservience to God, maintained it through reciprocity with parliament, and reinforced her worthiness to decide the matter by emphasizing her personal accomplishments as England's queen.

England's misogynist society accepted Elizabeth's worthiness to rule because her definition of her femininity was complimentary to her sovereignty. She appropriated divine authority through her subservience to God, maintained her status through maternal language to Parliament, and validated her sovereignty through her personal achievements. She consistently framed her sovereign authority with imagery that portrayed her femininity as beneficial to Parliament and the realm.

Elizabeth recreated herself as a virgin queen, divinely chosen to rule, and graced with the personal attributes necessary to protect England during a difficult time. She separated her femininity from her body politic, empowered her sovereign authority through her title of prince, and secured Parliament's loyalty by redefining her relationship to the English people as an exchange of love. Elizabeth ruled England successfully through imagery that defined her as a divine and beloved queen.

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